MARVELLOUS TWO-IN-ONE

BEM

AND

MASTERS OF INFINITY

No.31

No.6

THE PEGASUS PROJECT

50p
$2.00

NEWS AT BEM

As promised last time, this is a joint issue, with Bem and Masters of Infinity together for the first time in one mighty magazine; after this special occasion we go our separate ways again, with Bem-32 out in February (including the typing talents of Mike Taylor), and Masters of Infinity ≠7 out in March. I hope that Bem's readers are tempted by this collaboration to investigate a solo issue or two of Masters of Infinity!

One thing I didn't have a chance to comment on last time was the general subject of interviews, their popularity in fanzines and the pitfalls that can be involved. There are an extraordinary number of interviews in fanzines these days, and they vary greatly, from informal chats about an artist's techniques and history, to a general survey of the field "from above", to something more wide-ranging -- and sometimes you can get a personal attack on one comics professional by another slipping through. And that, as The Comics Journal is finding out (due to certain remarks about Mr M. Fleisher made by Mr H. Ellison), can have severe repercussions.

Please don't conclude that I'm thinking of the TCJ case in particular; but if the editor lets something controversial slip through, remember that just because it's there in black and white doesn't make it a fact of life. Different people put different interpretations on events, and can have different recollections of the past. In an interview, you can only get one point of view, unless you've somehow managed to get everyone involved round the same microphone; it's up to you, the reader, to put what is said into its proper perspective for yourself, based on what you know of the people involved and their achievements in the field. Given any situation like this, "the proof of the pudding is in the product..."

Anyway, onwards; since Mike wrote such a short editorial, I've got plenty of room, so the next order of the day is to thank everyone who voted for Bem as "Favourite British Fan Publication" in this year's Eagle Awards ballot; that 255 people gave Bem their vote, more people (and almost as high a percentage) than voted for both Comic Media News and Bem last time, was a very pleasant surprise. I'm very glad that Bem is so many people's favourite British fanzine; thank you for the Eagle Award, it's very much appreciated. And of course I must thank everyone who helped make Bem what it is, over the last few years: Mike, Kathleen, Keith, Adam, Russ, Pete, Nige, Chris, Brian, Dave, Laurence, Mal, Steve, Richard...in fact, all Bem's contributors. Now we have to work out what to do for an encore!

In the next issue of Bem, the new H.M.S. Conqueror serial will begin; it runs to three 5-page instalments, drawn by Dave Harwood, and the Conqueror crew are also cover-featured, with what should be Bem's first four-colour cover, pencilled by Dave Harwood and inked by Brian Bolland. The "guest-star" in the serial is pictured on this page; if this picture doesn't ensure that you place Bem-32 on order, then I think your thrill circuits need the attentions of a skilled electrician...

And after that, future plans for H.M.S. Conqueror can only be hinted at; suffice it to say that, after his brief respite as the letter-answerer this time, we're keeping Dave very busy, while other, shorter strips are also being planned. It's going to be a good year for Fl'ff, Frank and friends!

In the more immediate future, the review deadline for Bem-32 is January 3rd, with the issue due out in time for the February 7th Comic Mart at the Central Hall, Westminster. However, it looks as if I'll be moving from Worcester back down to the south-east soon after Christmas, so this could hold Bem up for a few weeks; we must see how it goes. In the longer run though, I'm convinced that this move will benefit Bem.

After our American cover last time, we have a selection of Marvel characters drawn by New Zealand artist Colin Wilson, who has been a Bem contributor since Bem-25, and has now come to London in search of fame & fortune. He's doing some work for the 2000AD people; but, luckily, he's kindly doing some work for us too. This cover ties in with a review of Marvel Two-In-One's "Pegasus Project" six-parter which you'll find a few pages on; how clever of Colin to connect it with the "two-in-one" teaming of Masters Of Infinity and Bem! It makes me wonder why neither Mike nor I thought of it... -Martin

RAVINGS...

One thing I've been asked about this joint Bem/MoI issue is, how are we going to arrange the subscribers copies? Obviously, people who subscribe to both fanzines won't receive two copies of this issue; it'll be sent out on Bem subscriptions, while MoI subs will be extended by one issue. People who subscribe only to Bem or MoI will receive this as a normal issue.

We've tried to balance the 'zine as well as possible, with the joint Robo-Hunter article, Oink, a special strip, Elfquest, Fantasy Unlimited, and half of "Audience Reaction" hopefully balancing out the regular Bem features.

And perhaps I'd better say one or two things about the F.U. two-pager. Recently, a lot of criticism has been levelled at the apparent self-worshipping aspect of fandom. However, I think that a knowledge of certain fanzines is desirable, certainly in this case, because in its time Fantasy Unlimited (later to become Comics Unlimited) gave a great deal of useful and interesting information, and by looking back the comics enthusiast can learn a lot--and the fanzine editor can perhaps prevent himself repeating what's gone before. Anyway, it's the last such feature for the time being, so we will see how things go from there.

Now that the Marvel convention's been and gone, I daresay we'll be seeing plenty of scathing remarks. Perhaps I should mention that my prediction in Masters Of Infinity ≠5 held up -- I found myself enjoying this con even more than the somewhat more carefully organized events of previous years. Thanks go to Gerald Midgley for putting me up over the Saturday night, and to everyone else who was sociable.

And finally, my congratulations to Tony O'Donnell for getting his cover for NEAR MYTHS ≠4 in the recent "Best of British Illustrators" exhibition at the I.C.A. in London. It was a pleasant surprise to see it there, along with the best that the country has to offer. -Mike

This is a joint issue of MASTERS OF INFINITY and BEM, edited by Mike Taylor (from 35 Fernhill Rd, Olton, Solihull, West Midlands, England) and Martin Lock, and published by Martin Lock.

This is MASTERS OF INFINITY ≠6, and BEM ≠31, and is distributed as an issue of Bem (a 30% wholesale discount is available from Titan Distributors Ltd, P.O. Box 250, London E3 4RT); Bem subscribers receive this as one issue of their subscription, as do Masters Of Infinity subscribers--subscribers to both magazines will get their MoI subscriptions extended by one issue. A six-issue subscription to MoI costs £2.00 (sent and payable to Mike Taylor); a six-issue subscription to Bem costs £3.00 (sent and payable to Martin Lock). This joint issue was printed by Streets (Printers) Ltd, The City Walls Press, Carden Street, Worcester WR1 2AY. Copyright (c) 1980 by Martin Lock -- except pages 22, 23, 31, and 33-36, which are copyright (c) 1980 by Mike Taylor. No part of Bem or MoI may be reprinted, xeroxed or copied by any means without the written permission of their respective editors; all rights reserved. All comicbook covers and similar art are reproduced for review purposes, and are copyrighted by their respective publishers. No responsibility can be assumed for the return of unsolicited art or manuscripts. Ed Sallis, Superswipe, and Ruan Lanihorne are members of the Martin Lock group. Opinions expressed by Bem's contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor. All letters will be considered for publication, including the full address, unless you indicate otherwise. Both Bem and MoI are amateur, non profit-making publications. Comments in Audience Reaction this time are by Dave Harwood, unless otherwise indicated. All news items marked "TCR" are (c) 1980 Street Enterprises, and are reprinted from The Comic Reader with permission. Bem's Australian Agent is George Lee.

A full-page advertisement in Bem costs £17, same size; the deadline for Bem-32 is January 3rd, both for ads and for reviews. For other details, please enquire.

COMICS NEWS

Roger Stern and John Byrne have quit CAPTAIN AMERICA after the 40th anniversary issue; the new creative team will be Chris Claremont, Bill Sienkiewicz, and Joe Sinnott. John Byrne also left X-MEN one issue earlier than reported last time; #144 is drawn by Brent Anderson, and then Dave Cockrum returns with #145.

John Byrne will be taking over scripting and full pencils on FANTASTIC FOUR, and Joe Sinnott will be leaving as finisher with John's first full-pencil issue--John will be doing layouts only for one issue to start off with. The likely candidate to ink John Byrne's pencils seems to be Joe Rubinstein.

Meanwhile, John Byrne is likely to take over the pencils on SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN, keeping the Stern/Byrne team going.

MAN-THING is cancelled, with #11; and EPIC is increased in frequency with its 4th issue to bi-monthly, while HOWARD THE DUCK, now quarterly, is looking for a new scripter; Denny O'Neil, who had taken over from Bill Mantlo, is over-extended.

Terry Austin is taking over the inks on SPIDER-WOMAN, and is also doing some outside work. After issues with work by Gene Colan and Mike Golden, the new permanent DR STRANGE artist is to be Frank Miller. Besides being regular KA-ZAR artist, Brent Anderson may also be doing further X-MEN work beyond #144: annuals, specials, and fill-ins, perhaps.

Larry Lieber has replaced John Romita as artist on the Spider-Man comic strip. Lieber has been plotting the strip from time to time, and is likely to do a bit more of that, too. He continues to write the diminishing Hulk strip, but now with Charlie Nicholas as artist. Pablo Marcos has followed Rudy Nebres on the Conan strip--Rudy lasted just a couple of weeks at best--and Doug Moench is now scripting it. Al Williamson follows Alfredo Alcala on the Archie Goodwin-scripted Star Wars strip this coming February, and in March Cary Bates & Gil Kane reinstate the Lone Ranger strip (to tie in with the film). Russ Heath, who was supposed to take on that particular masked man, has been doing Stan Lynde's Latigo strip of late, and has also done the layouts on Walt Disney's "Condorman" movie adaptation for the Sunday comic strip mini-series.

Mike Grell will be doing a couple of fill-ins over at Marvel, for a change of pace. His art in Questar on the "Just Imagine: Jeanie" strip begins with issue 10, cover-dated December.

MARVEL FANFARE, the book originally announced as a 60 cent, 32 page adless book, has been renamed MARVEL SHOWCASE, raised to $1.00, with cover stock used instead of newsprint on the interiors, with heavier, 70 pound stock with hand separated colour on the cover. It will be 32 pages with no ads, and will be sold only through direct sales comics shops. -TCR

The other shop-only project, THE MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL, is now supposed to begin with Jim Starlin's DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL --the plot is being kept under wraps. -TCR

MARVEL UNIVERSE, meanwhile, will be an all-colour magazine package similar to EPIC ILLUSTRATED. The graphics for this and the GRAPHIC NOVEL series were designed by Neal Adams. -TCR

Mike Friedrich reports that advance sales on THE DAZZLER #1 have surpassed a phenomenal 400,000 copies, a success by any standards. -TCR

Gene Colan, after leaving DR STRANGE, will be the regular penciller once again on THE AVENGERS, with Bill Mantlo as the regular scripter from #211, following fill-in issues written by Mike W. Barr and J. Marc DeMatteis. -TCR/M

Both MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #75 and MASTER OF KUNG FU #100, cover-dated May, are double-sized issues; MoKF features two stories, the first one a tale of an evil scheme hatched some fifty years ago by Shang's dear ol' dad, which leads to the second as Fu Manchu's madness stretches across the decades to menace his son in the present. MTIO (by Tom DeFalco & Alan Kupperberg) has the Thing joined by The Avengers to take on Annihilus, Blastaar, and the Super-Adaptoid in a cosmic-scale battle for control of the negative zone.

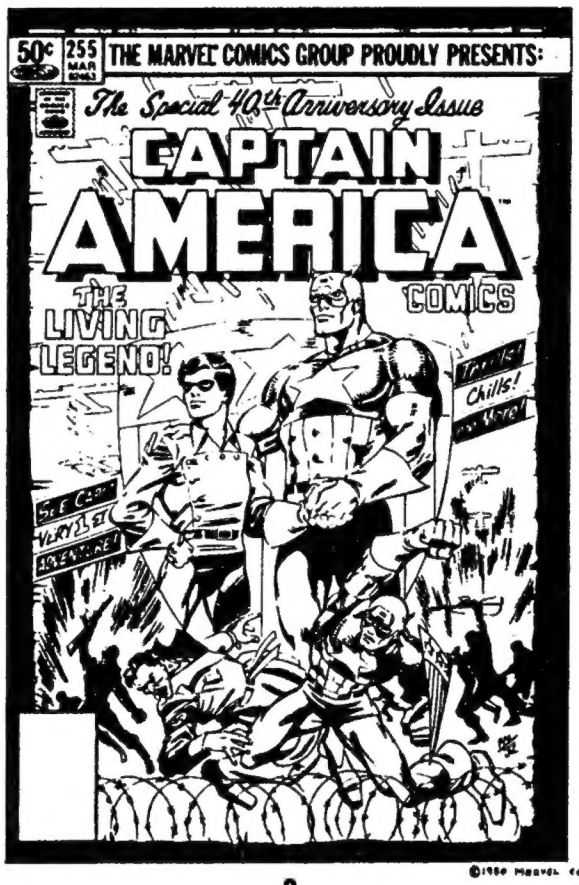
Also among May cover-dates, not only do the X-Men (#145) encounter Doctor Doom, Arcade, Havok, Polaris, and the original Banshee in Murderworld in their own book --in SPIDER-WOMAN #38 they team with the web-lady against the Juggernaut, Black Tom and the new Banshee, while in ROM #18 they battle their host. That's also the month that DAREDEVIL (#170) goes monthly, Doc Sampson guest-stars with THE MICRONAUTS (#29), the Red Skull visits CAPTAIN AMERICA (#257), and Captain Marvel stars in MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #12.

Among June cover-dates, MARVEL TEAM-UP #106 stars Spider-Man and She-Hulk, while WHAT IF #27 is scheduled as "What If Phoenix Had Lived", written by Mary Jo Duffy and pencilled by Jerry Bingham. MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE guest-stars Giant-Man and Iceman, by DeFalco, Bingham & Stone, while SPIDER-WOMAN (#39) takes on the assembled Avengers. MARVEL PREMIERE #60 features the conclusion of "City of the Damned", starring Dr Who, written by Pat Mills & John Wagner and drawn by Dave Gibbons, with another Gene Day cover.

The September FANTASTIC FOUR (#234) will be an extra-length issue, to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the dawning of the Marvel Age with FF #1; the rest of the line will also harken back to their roots that month in some way.

Marvel is attempting to get the adaptation rights to Steven Spielberg's RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, and also Ralph Bakshi's AMERICAN POP. -TCR

CAPTAIN AMERICA AND THE CAMPBELL KIDS is a special, regular-sized comic with 25 story pages, by Mantlo, Kupperberg, Trimpe & Green -- sponsored by the soup company, it promotes energy conservation.



2000AD prog 191 features a poster of Strontium Dog as the centre-spread, drawn by Carlos Ezquerra. This is part of a continuity scheme that week across all the IPC boys adventure comics; BATTLE has a Messerschmitt, TIGER (into which SPEED merged after the issue dated October 25th, a run of 31 issues) has a cricket bowler, and ROY OF THE ROVERS has--you've guessed it--a footballer. The four posters have the general title of "The Attackers".

Also in prog 191, Walter returns to the Judge Dredd strip--scripted of course by T.B. Grover, and drawn by Emberton, whose style may seem familiar to followers of the Robo-Hunter series.

Prog 192 is the Christmas issue, with a wraparound cover by Ezquerra featuring a festive theme. There is a full-page on "Things to Come In '81", with details of various new strips -- some of which will, no doubt, debut in the next "boom issue", prog 200.

Prog 193 is the New Year issue -- and, for the new year, a new price of 15p. The cover features Judge Dredd by Mike McMahon --it celebrates 2000AD's good showing in the Eagle Awards. But, more on <u>them</u> on page 32! A 4-part Dredd story, drawn by Mike McMahon, begins that week, with the arrival in town of "The Fink" -- he has a bone to pick with Dredd, as regular Dredd

LIGHT UP THE SKY WITH YOUR OWN FLYING SAUCER-DETAILS INSIDE!
PROG 190
13 DEC 80
IN ORBIT EVERY MONDAY
14p EARTH MONEY
2000 AD
FEATURING JUDGE DREDD
Strontium Dog
GONNA HANG YA ALPHA... HANG YA HIGH!

readers, if they are alert, may well soon realize...

Prog 194 begins Tharg's "Year of the Alien", with an appropriate cover by Dave Gibbons; and prog 195's cover is by Ian Gibson for the "Return to Armageddon" strip, while a pin-up from the Nemesis series features Torquemada's favourite transportation, the "Gundola", drawn by Kevin O'Neill.

So, a settled, steady few weeks for 2000AD; "Dash Decent" is being continued after its initial 12 episodes for at least a further 6 -- "despite popular demand", as the saying goes. Why, it's even going to be in colour on the back page from time to time! Artist Kev O'Neill has kindly consented to reveal the secret of Dash's special effects, in a 2-page feature for the "1982" 2000AD Annual.

Helped by the "huge success" of the direct mail order sales of the 1981 Judge Dredd Annual, the decision has been taken to proceed with one for next year; the cover is being done by Mike McMahon, and it is hoped that he will draw the colour Judge Dredd stories inside too. Since it is being edited from the 2000AD offices, and will be done by the same printer, we can expect another top-quality effort.

A 1982 Dan Dare Annual is also being prepared by David Hunt, until recently

editor of SPEED and before that the man responsible for BATTLE; this will tie in with the big-budget Dan Dare tv series due out in the autumn. See page 41 for more details; the only thing I can add to what Mal says is that it seems certain now that IPC will publish the new Dan Dare weekly comic themselves. Brian Bolland has done two full-colour sample pages, one of which is being used as a promotional sheet for the trade.

And one further IPC item of news: an additional publication from the 2000AD offices is being planned for next year. More cannot be revealed -- yet!

At Marvel Britain, after delays mainly on the monthlies due to problems getting material through from the States, the titles are now back on their schedules. Several new launches are planned for the new year -- two may involve new material.

Meanwhile, to strengthen the line, three mergers are planned. SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN will be merged into SAVAGE ACTION soon; TEAM-UP merges into SPIDER-MAN AND HULK WEEKLY with #412, with #19 its last issue, and FORCES IN COMBAT merges into FUTURE TENSE with #13, after 37 solo issues. All logical moves; the addition of Rom to the FUTURE TENSE line-up, alongside Star Trek and Marvel's other SF properties, makes it seem a very strong title.

DC: THE SUPERHEROES continues its policy of using original full-colour covers by British artists; #3 features Batman and the Joker by Alan Craddock, #4 (out in January) has Superman and a starry-eyed girl by David Jackson, while #5 ought to have Superman again, to tie in with the advance publicity for the second half of The Movie, by Alan Craddock. And #6 is to feature the origin of Green Arrow on its cover, drawn by Bob Wakelin, who has also done a cover featuring Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, to be used as a reserve.

Bob Wakelin's work can also be found in the European editions of 1984 and COMICS INTERNATIONAL; since most of the material in the American Warren magazines is now reprinted from Europe rather than done specially for America, you may well see Bob's work in 1994, ROOK and the other titles soon.

Egmont's DC Annuals for 1982 include SUPERMAN, with a cover by Dave Gibbons, BATMAN, with a Brian Bolland cover, and SUPERHEROES, which has a cover drawn by Alan Craddock.

"Strips 80" was held on Saturday 22nd November, for comics professionals, and, our inside man informs us, was a very successful event, with various visitors from America and Europe. The Society Of Strip Illustration annual awards were presented; these included:

The best adventure strip art in comics prize went to Dave Gibbons for his work on Dr Who--much appreciated in Europe as well as in Britain, it seems! The script award went to John Wagner for Judge Dredd.

Don Lawrence was given an award for his years of work on "The Trigan Empire".

Also released at Strips 80 was a glossy-covered portfolio/book of the same name, published by the SSI and designed as a showcase-cum-art directory for its members --according to Mal Burns, it manages to be both elegantly bound and loose-leaf; it's available by mail only for £2.50 (cheques or postal orders payable to The Society of Strip Illustration) from the SSI at 5, Alma Terrace, Wandsworth Common, London SW18. Artists contributing include Martin Asbury, Jim Baikie, Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, Trev Goring, Frank Hampson, Cam Kennedy, Garry Leach, Mike Noble, Arthur Ranson, John Richardson, Ron Tiner, Keith Watson, and many more.

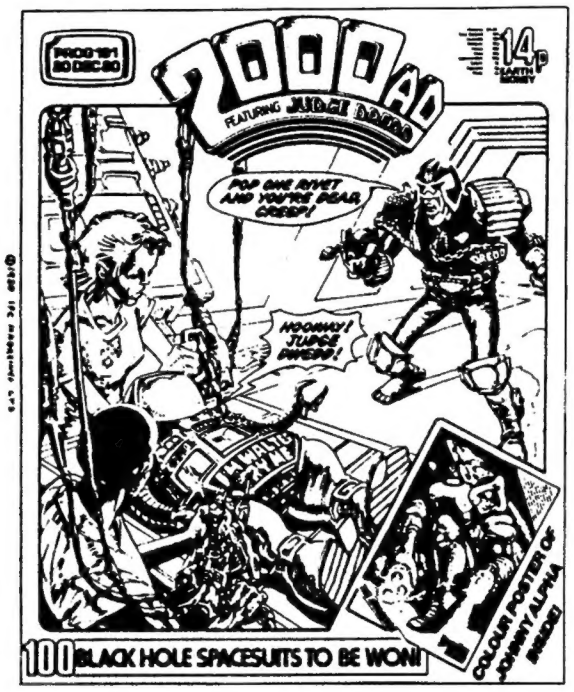
The first two books of "Storm" (about which more will be revealed on page 12) are strongly rumoured to be coming out in this country in early 1981, perhaps in one volume.

A 24-page Angus McKie colour SF strip can be found in the "November B" issue of (#79B) of PILOTE; it also contains a 6-page black & white Berni Wrightson strip dated 1977 but apparently, says Mal Burns, unseen before. Colin Wilson is also doing some work for PILOTE now.

A 96-page full-colour book collection of strips by Caza, "The Nightmares and Dreams of Caza", is scheduled to appear in English in late spring, at £3.95 or $7.95, depending which side of the North Atlantic you happen to be on at the time. It is being printed in Spain, with Volks Verlag of Germany as original publishers.

KNOCKABOUT COMICS is a new comic out, distributed by Hassle Free Press and with a cover price of 75p -- if you can't find it locally, it can be obtained for 75p plus p&p from Knockabout Comics, 249-251 Kensal Road, London W10. It has a splendid full-colour cover by Hunt Emerson; inside can be found work by J.H. Szostek, Cliff Harper (who painted the back cover), Jay Kinney, S. Clay Wilson, Melinda Gebbie, Susan Varty, Hunt E., and Graham Manley. Reportedly, a nice package.

Meanwhile in America, HEAVY METAL has postponed most of its new UK and American material until April/May; they have been given access to METAL HURLANT material until then, and will make full use of this extension to the old arrangement. It should mean the appearance of sequels and continuations previously inaccessible to HEAVY METAL, so some plot-lines left in mid-air should now be resolved.


2000AD
FEATURING JUDGE DREDD
FOR ONE RIVET, AND YOU'RE DEAD, CREEP!
HOORAY! JUDGE DREDD!
100 BLACK HOLE SPACESUITS TO BE WON!
COLOUR POSTER OF JOHNNY ALPHA INSIDE!

Over at DC, Ross Andru is taking over editing WARLORD; its former editor, Jack C. Harris, will be writing the new, "permanent" back-up, bringing back Kamandi. These stories will be new; the 2 completed issues published in CANCELLED COMIC CAVALCADE took the character in a different direction.

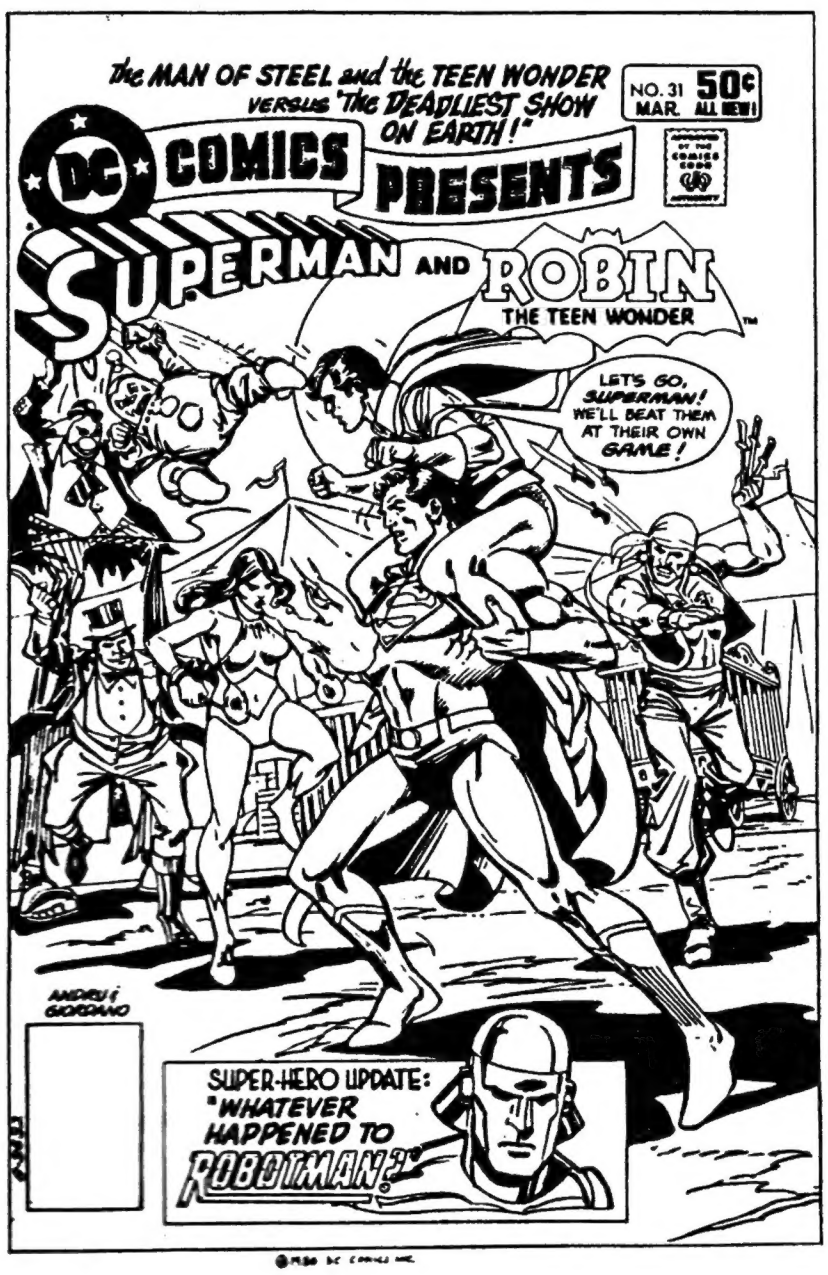
Rich Buckler will be pencilling Roy Thomas's new ALL-STAR feature, which, of course, will premiere as a free 16-page insert in JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA before coming out in its own title -- which will start with #1, by the way.

The current mystery-orientated series characters (Dr 13, Mr E, Johnny Peril) are likely to disappear, being replaced by all-new series starring The Spectre, The Phantom Stranger, and (probably) Deadman. Mike Fleisher may return to scripting The Spectre, if his schedule (and inclination) allows.

Dick Giordano will be inking the Batman & Hulk tabloid edition being produced by DC, to be released in late 1981; Len Wein and J.L. Garcia Lopez are the writer and pencil artist. The Superman/Spider-Man tabloid being worked on by Marvel is due out in the spring, with a cover price of $2.50.

Dick, in his capacity of DC editor, is handling the 3-part miniseries THE PHANTOM ZONE (working title only). It will reveal the history and secrets of the villains banished to Krypton's mysterious Phantom Zone, and will be cover-dated January to March, 1982, on sale in October, November & December 1981 -- to coincide with the release of SUPERMAN II.

Jack C. Harris has just appeared on the American syndicated TV show "To Tell The Truth" as an impostor.


The MAN OF STEEL and the TEEN WONDER versus "The DEADLIEST SHOW ON EARTH!"
NO. 31 MAR. 50¢ ALL NEW!
DC COMICS PRESENTS
SUPERMAN AND ROBIN THE TEEN WONDER
LET'S GO, SUPERMAN! WE'LL BEAT THEM AT THEIR OWN GAME!
ANDRU & GIORDANO
SUPER-HERO UPDATE: "WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ROBOTMAN?"

NO. 273 MAR. 50¢ ALL NEW!
DC
LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
A 25-PAGE LEGION EPIC!
MY FIRST OFFICIAL ACT AS PRESIDENT OF EARTH IS TO BANISH BRAINIAC 5 FROM THE LEGION AND THE PLANET FOR THE CRIME OF MURDER!
BUCKLER & MITCHELL
ARE THE CHARGES TRUE OR FALSE? CAN THE LEGIONNAIRES FIND "THE MAN WHO FRAMED BRAINIAC 5?"

Bat Lash may return as the permanent back-up strip in JONAH HEX. Two stories are scheduled to appear by Len Wein & Dan Spiegle, and it will be decided whether the strip should replace Scalphunter. -TCR

Julius Schwartz will be in editorial control of the 2nd Superman-related miniseries, HEROES OF KRYPTON (also a working title). The writing assignment has been handed to E. Nelson Bridwell, DC's resident Superman expert. This series, which will tell the history of the El family of Krypton, will go on sale in June to August, 1981, with cover-dates of September to November.

Len Wein is currently lining up creative talent to produce DC's latest Tabloid Edition, SUPERMAN'S FORTRESS OF SOLITUDE. This special $2.95, 10" by 13½" edition will be on DC's August schedule, and go on sale in the month of May.

Jim Starlin will draw the DC COMICS PRESENTS "Whatever Happened To Starman?" story written by Paul Levitz, the first of the "Whatever Happened To..." series to co-star Superman in a book-lengther. Len Wein plans to contribute a "Whatever Happened to the Crimson Avenger?" which he hopes to get Steve Ditko to draw. Mike Tiefenbacher's contributions to the feature have been assigned: Star Hawkins is being done by Alex Saviuk, and Rex the Wonder Dog with Detective Chimp is tentatively scheduled to be done by Gil Kane. Mike's most recent sale stars Rip Hunter, Time Master. -TCR

Jim Starlin did a cover for DETECTIVE COMICS featuring Batman, Robin & Batgirl which Gerry Conway is writing a story around for DETECTIVE #503. -TCR

Martin Pasko is to script a Batman/Swamp Thing issue for BRAVE & BOLD. Gerry Conway & Jim Aparo will handle the Green Lantern and Guardians of the Universe appearances with Batman in BRAVE & BOLD #173-174. -TCR

Julius Schwartz indicates that there is to be another Superman /Flash team-up in DC COMICS PRESENTS, and the first teaming of Superman and Plastic Man. Having lost his berth in ADVENTURE to the new "Dial H For Hero" series, Plas is to be a semi-regular back-up feature in SUPER FRIENDS, still written by Marty Pasko and drawn by Joe Staton & Bob Smith, starting in #43 and alternating with the Wonder Twins. -TCR/M

DETECTIVE COMICS #500 has 80 pages for $1.50. "To Kill a Legend" co-stars Batman and the Phantom Stranger by TV-writer Alan Brennert & Dick Giordano; Len Wein & Jim Aparo offer "The Too Many Crooks Caper", which features Slam Bradley, Roy Raymond, Mysto the Magician, Captain Compass, Pow Wow Smith, & the Human Target. Joe Kubert illustrates the Paul Levitz-scripted "The Strange Death of Dr Erdel", while Batman, Robin & Deadman feature in "What Happens When a Batman Dies" by Cary Bates, Carmine Infantino & Bob Smith. "The Final Mystery of Edgar Allan Poe" stars the Elongated Man by Mike W. Barr & Garcia Lopez, and Walter Gibson contributes a Batman text story, illustrated by Tom Yeates. -ML

ART CREDITS

John Bolton: 44; Mark Casto: 25 (strip); Mike Collins: 17, 19 (pencils), 33-36; Rob Davis: 24; Mark Farmer: 8 (right), 9 (right), 11, 13 (right), 19 (inks), 22/23, 29; Ian Gibson (reprints): 7, 9 (top); Dave Harwood: 2, 13 (top); B.J. Martin: 15 (strip); Wayne Massop: 25 (right); Nick Neocleous: 15 (top); Wendy Pini (reprints): 31; Superswipe: 8 (top & left), 9 (left), 10, 32; J.H. Szostek: 43; Mike Taylor: 12, 44 (colour separations); G. Whittaker: 39; Colin Wilson: 1, 27.

Sam Slade ROBO HUNTER

CALL CITY 344 129 3447.
THE BLACK CORNER, THE MIGHTY OND ARMY – ANTI-HUME! THEY WE'RE ONLY IMITATION NS – AND THEY LOOK LIKE VE GOT THE MUSCLE TO PROVE
©1980 IPC MAGAZINES LTD.
2000AD
Credit Card:
SCRIPT ROBOT T B GROVER
ART ROBOT I GIBSON
LETTERING ROBOT THOM
COMPU-73
WE'RE THE FIGHTING FIRST AND WE NEVER GIVE AN INCH! WE'RE THE DROIDS TO CALL ON IF YOU'RE EVER IN A PINCH! UP, DROIDS, AND AT 'EM! AT 'EM, DROIDS, AT 'EM!

MADE IN BRITAIN

BY
RUAN LANIHORNE
with help from
MIKE TAYLOR

The 76th issue of 2000AD featured a crisis aboard Dan Dare's battle-fortress, while flesh-crazy dinosaur Satanus was making the fatal mistake of tangling with Judge Dredd, and in "Ant Wars" the giant insects were closing in on Rio. The Future-shock had references to "Maureen" and "Kathleen", plus a fellow who looked suspiciously like Nige Edwards -- not too surprising, considering that "The Illusion Man" was credited to script robot Martin Lock - but the main item of interest was the debut of Sam Slade, Robo-hunter.

And an auspicious start it was, too. Ian Gibson provided a suitably striking cover of Sam - and the story began on page 3, with the hero charging straight at us.

"I came into the apartment blasting", the narration began. "I've been at this game for forty years and there's one thing I've learned -- never give a robot an even break.."

The first Robo-hunter story ran to 22 episodes; from prog 76 to prog 84, and then continuing from prog 100 to prog 112. The gap was caused by the merger of Starlord and 2000AD, and caused some suspense. Sam Slade was too good a character to be left in mid-adventure like that...

A robo-hunter: a man who hunted down malfunctioning, rogue robots..a 22nd century bounty hunter. Sam Slade was one of the best on Earth, but he was also one of the oldest. There's no retirement plan for robo-hunters; when any armchair, shoe-shiner or vending machine can become a deadly enemy, you don't live to pick up a pension. So, when the International Space Commission offered him the task of investigating the planet Verdus, with the option of a bullet in the head if he refused, he, er, jumped at the chance?

Verdus had been made ready for human occupation by an early model robot, SJ1. He'd built other robots, and they'd turned the planet into a mechanised paradise, ripe for human colonisation as soon as a faster than light drive safe for humans could be developed; and, 24 years after the robots sent the "ready" signal, the first human colonist ship-load was sent. They arrived safely... but after that, no more was heard from them. Further parties were sent, including space troopers...but they too disappeared without trace.

Pausing only to write out his will, Slade boarded a flectron drive ship piloted by Commander Jim Kidd, a modest youngster who described himself as "the best snutting pilot in the whole snutting 8th flotilla". The two of them set off for Verdus...but the ship's shields failed to work as it hit the light barrier. When Slade regained consciousness, he discovered the effect of unshielded ftl travel on humans; he was 35 years younger, in his prime again, while poor Commander Kidd sat in the middle of his space suit, a baby again!

So, Slade went down to Verdus, after changing his pilot's nappy ("Well, I can't

help it - I'm just a snutting baby, Slade!"), and was soon deep in trouble. A crowd of robots were waiting for them, and, while agreeing that an order from a human was a sacred command, completely ignored Slade's protests, and took him away, along with Kidd, to the experimentation complex.

Things looked black for our heroes; they were caged, with a notice on the front saying "Do not feed! To be processed as fertiliser soonest!". Fortunately, the bars were too far apart to hold Commander Kidd, who managed to retrieve Sam's gun. The show was on the road once again!

The trouble with Verdus was that the new generations of robots refused to recognise the human settlers as real humans. These weak, fallible, fleshy bipeds were clearly inferior to humans - they were simulated humans, or "sims" for short. Lock them up, use them for fertiliser, and wait for the real humans to arrive, to take up their inheritance. But when, oh when, would they come?

After one of the most violent, oil-thirsty jail breaks on record, Kidd, Slade, and his faithful robometer, Cutie, evaded their pursuers, and took shelter in one of the millions of unoccupied apartments. Unoccupied? Being Verdus, the place was crawling with robots. A pair of size 12 walking boots, a clock, a chair, a kettle, a bed, a vacuum cleaner, a garbage can, a dictionay... dozens of them! They were so talkative, disputatious, and all-around human that it wasn't long before Slade and Kidd went off to bed.

In the morning, the verdict was in. 36% thought Slade and Kidd were sims; 22% thought they were humans; 7% thought they were sims who thought they were humans; 29% didn't know; and 6% didn't care.

Leaving Kidd as a hostage, and guided by Boots (viewers of "The Goodies" will have seen the ancestor of this useful device, a pair of over-shoes linked to a motor, allowing a human wearing the pair to move rather faster than usual, or follow a pre-programmed path without effort), the Robo-hunter set off in search of SJ1. Passing his companion off as a simulated sim, Boots checked at the Robotic Records Office for the location of SJ1; setting off by taxi ("Oh boy! Oh boy! I've been waiting 30 years for my first fare! Where to, Boots?"), they soon reached the robot recycling plant, where hordes of worn-out, low-grade robots were waiting to be scrapped. SJ1 was employed in the clearing bay on light cleaning - and he recognised Slade as a true human! Unfortunately, even though he was the original robot, SJ1 had no special status...he wasn't believed by the other robots at the plant, and he, Slade, and Boots only just managed to escape. Still, Boots was convinced now

© I.P.C. MAGAZINES LTD

©1980 I.P.C. MAGAZINES LTD

and Slade had a witness in SJ1 ("Smoking Joe"--he burns solid fuel)...all he had to do was convince the rest of the tin freaks on the planet...

And at that point, the strip vanished for four months, something done only rarely, but preferable certainly to an artificially speedy wrap-up over one or two episodes, which tends to happen when comics merge. It makes readers shiver with dread whenever the blurb "Big News Inside For Every Reader" is sighted!

A trip through the sewers, to avoid pursuers on the way to the chief robot, Big Brain, led to an encounter with a sewergator, and, inside this whale-size sewer cleanser, to a game of "robopoly" with the craft's sole occupant, with Sam's freedom as the stake. As you might expect, this game was suspiciously similar to monopoly, but with tiny robots as players. Faced with an opponent who cheated, Sam had no choice -- he came to a business arrangement with the tiny robo-cops, and the opposing player's piece not only didn't pass go or collect £200, once he went to jail he was never seen again!

Next stop - the Verdus Houses of Parliament. Considering what the Westminster one gets up to, the strip was positively restrained. There was the Eccentric Party, the Slightly-Stupid Party, The Angry Party ("For two beans the Angry Party will come over there and bash your stupid circuits"), the Stir-It-Up Party ("The Stir - It - Up Party will provide those beans"), the Doubtful Party, the Sarcastic Party... even the Christmas Party!

Big Brain was less amusing, though - his robotic intelligence had been augmented by "sim" brain tissue, so much so that when Slade fired his gun, the ray was bent back away from Big Brain, and wrapped round our hero. A tough adversary - but when SJ1 was brought before him, he believed him. "Sims" were humans...and his brain...was made of ...was made of...?

The enormity of his crimes gave Big Brain a complete nervous breakdown...and with him gone, the authority on Verdus rested with the parliament, and with the army. The first army pledged their loyalty to King Sam; the second army were not noted for the flexibility of their thinking, though, and promptly declared war.

The first army was very British, led by a robot modelled on Montgomery of Alamein (though not as brave - his favourite tactic was a personal strategic withdrawal). The second army, though, had a decidedly teutonic slant; General 2 had a monocle, for a start, and a distinct lack of the proper sporting attitude to war. Despite Slade's expert assistance, not to mention a certain 37 year old baby, things were soon going badly for King Sam's forces; and soon, he had a best friend to avenge. Things seemed hopeless, - until he remembered what an Amstrang Oscillator could do, tied in to the Verdus radio transmitter. In one fell swoop, he managed to blow the circuits of every robot on the planet..

Prog 111 saw the trip back to Earth begun with Kidd, the only one who could pilot it, taking every opportunity to get his own back for the indignities suffered from Slade on Verdus; no wonder in the last instalment that when Sam Slade stepped out to a triumphant reception on good old Terra, at the James Callaghan Memorial Space Drome, the young pilot could be seen dangling from the ceiling by a rope round his ankles, gagged and bound. Despite the fact that Sam had left Verdus absolutely useless, it was an official success - after all, a failure would have reflected badly on the men who assigned him in the first place...

And so, the story ended, with Kidd being carted off in a nandroid, to go through that whole complicated business of growing up for a second time, and Slade going off on a well-earned holiday with three ladies of his acquaintance.

Perhaps one of the most distinguishing characteristics of Robo-hunter would be the art. When the strip first began, the visuals were supplied by both Ferrer and Gibson, and gave only a hint at what was to come. Not that they were deficient in any way - on the contrary, there was an excellent combination of dramatic layouts and fluid movement, and yet Ian Gibson's unique style was later to emerge at even greater heights.

At the beginning, though, the figures were bold and striking, and the action well conveyed. Even when the story called for a small army of robots to be included, there remained a certain bold simplicity and lack of clutter. All in all, it was a good start.

With the 4th episode, Ian Gibson took on the full art chores, and the difference was instantly apparent. His treatment of the

©1980 I.P.C. MAGAZINES LTD

figures was freer and more expressive, while he seemed to delight in extensive rendering of highly complicated robots... Incredible amounts of fine detail seemed to be Gibson's forte, and while it was in evidence in that fourth episode, it was to run completely wild in future instalments! One can almost imagine Mr. Gibson reading the John Wagner scripts and smiling with eager anticipation at each scene which calls for a multitude of mechanical weirdos...

And yet despite the incalculable number of gears and cogs that went flying, Gibson had an excellent sense of movement, and that, coupled with an effective use of artificial tone, meant that never would the main action be lost amidst a sea of detail. Slade was a good, strong character and he powered his way through every panel, commanding the attention he deserved.

And the robots themselves were incredibly varied and imaginative. John Wagner (a.k.a. T.B.Grover) managed to come up with robots specially designed to suit every purpose imaginable, and to give them all personalities, all likeable in one way or another, while Ian Gibson designed their appearence, enthusiastically adding to the initial conception. The result was brilliantly controlled chaos, and the reader could only let himself be carried along in a wave of madness, enjoying every second of it.

One of John Wagner's prime talents has been to take a solid, fairly conventional plot, and twist it off-centre. The basic idea of "Verdus: Planet of the robots" could have made a good Rick Random picture library 64 page story - but, wearing his T.B.Grover (peaked) hat, he transformed it into a 2000AD story second only to Judge Dredd in popularity. A 37 year old baby as co-star? Robot everythings, from teacups to paddy wagons, all calmly running a planet? First person narration by a ruthless, canny, wryly humorous bounty hunter with a high regard for his own skin, a steady trigger finger, and his secretary clipped to his belt?

Humour was abundant; but, as with all good comedy, it was balanced by an underlying current of the dark side of the farce. We saw the pathetic would-be colonists, "sims", led off to the fertilizer vats; we saw them unable to move when Sam Slade sprang their cells open; and, in the end, Verdus became

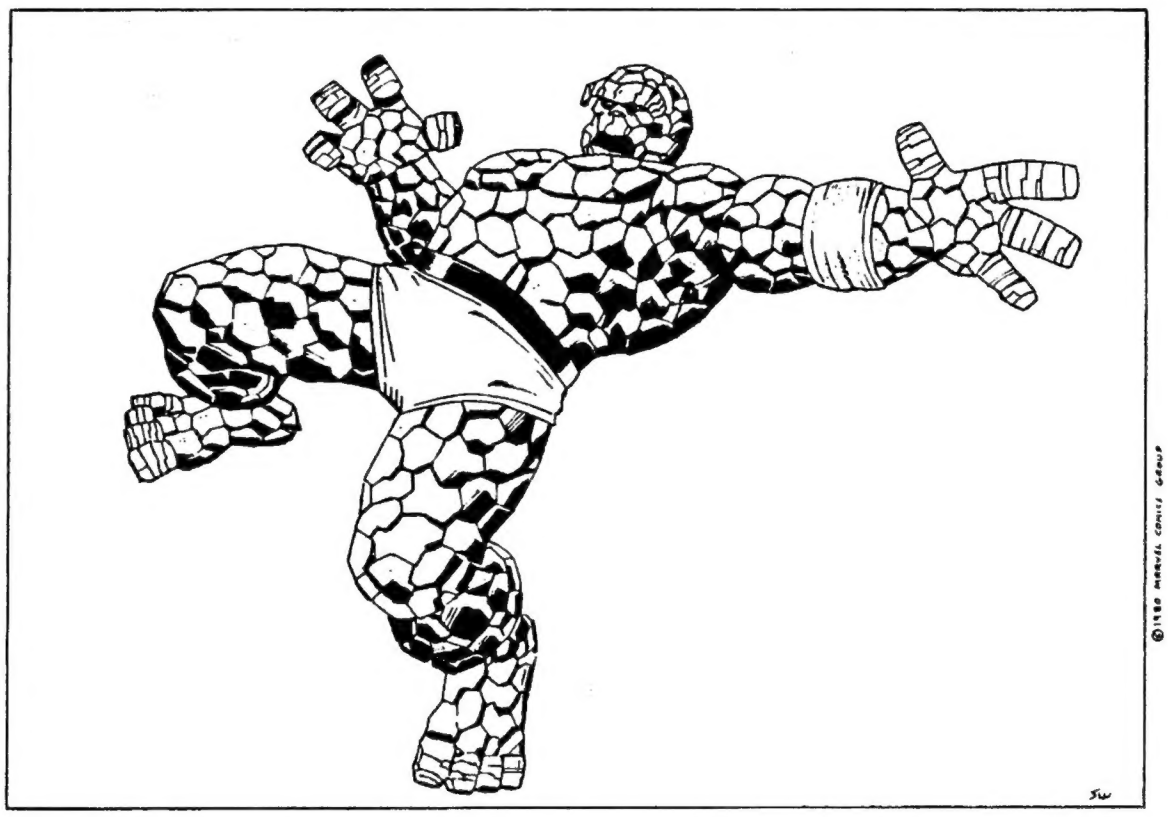
a planet of death for them and for all its robots, including many that John and Ian had made us like and admire.

Sam's second adventure, "Day of the Droids", began in prog 152 earlier this year, and ran uninterrupted (except for the IPC industrial problems in May and June) for 23 issues. This tale took place in Sam's own city, and charted the rise, and eventual defeat of Omerta - the God-Droid, who made offers you couldn't refuse, and took over all the rackets in the city. In fact, he came pretty near to taking over the city, by replacing all the councillers with robots loyal to him, having all robo-hunters locked up in New Sing Sing Prison, and giving all the cops robot assistants who, at a given signal, assassinated their partners. Trust Sam to be the one robo-hunter to break out of gaol, free the mobster who had originally imported Omerta from the old country, find out where the real councillers had been stashed.. and generally mix things up! With his self-appointed robot assistant Hoagy (who'd answered an ad in a newspaper that he himself had placed), and a robo-stogie designed to cut down his nicotine and tar intake, Sam was in the thick of uncontrolled, wild chaos. The scripter's imagination wasn't the only thing to run riot, with robo-mobsters battling constructs from the local equivalent of Disneyland, and then the Amalgamated Android's Union entering the fray. It came as no great surprise when, the menace over and normality returned, Sam had to leave, heading across the Atlantic for Brit-Cit. And only Sam could have been surprised to find a disguised Hoagy in the seat behind him!

It isn't what you plot, it's the way that you plot it, and what you add, making memorable characters out of almost nothing. Coach Cuss and his android football team; Molotov, the leader of the AAU (with a name like that, he had to be a cocktail shaker, right?): the Slade androids that the God-Droid set on Sam, each full of Sam's high opinion of himself; and of course the earnest, admiring, mentally deficient Hoagy, always sure that Sam knew what he was doing. Being dumped in the canal in large cement overshoes, courtesy of the Brothers Rocko? Trust Sam, he knew what he was doing - that Sam, he's a cool one. And when Sam asked Hoagy to provide "a set of wheels", for a fast getaway, he did better than that! He provided a whole pile of wheels, in case Sam needed a special size...

Little wonder that Robo-hunter has become the second most popular character to originate in 2000AD, beaten only by that sober, upright lawman, Joe Dredd; with Ian Gibson's fine, flexible style of art, and John Wagner's inspired scripting, he had every advantage over the other characters that have risen, and fallen, over the last four years. With only two adventures under his belt so far, this has to be an excellent start to what one hopes will be a long and notorious career - and we're sure we're not alone in looking forward eagerly to his sojourn in Brit-Cit!

Marvel Six-In-One ..... The Pad-a-Plot Project



After a lengthy period of collecting comics, say ten to fifteen years, there comes a moment, brought upon perhaps by space limitations, perhaps by finance, perhaps simply by a sense of perspective, when you yell "Enough!" Faced with the prospect of having a room stacked floor-to-ceiling with comic books, or renting a warehouse, or taking a second mortgage, or, the most valid alternative, simply cutting down on the number of titles you buy and collect, the latter choice seems the most viable. Then comes the heart-rending decision; what stays, and what goes. And after the traumatic effects of discarding past acquisitions die down, you're still faced with the problem of what is or is not worth collecting out of the current output, which ultimately boils down to personal values. The easiest decisions are at both ends of the spectrum; Heavy Metal definitely is worth collecting --The Spectacular Spider-Man definitely isn't. Finer decisions are involved with the upper-grade middle-of-the-road material, such as Marvel Two-In-One's "Project Pegasus" issues.

As well as being a collector, I'm also a dealer (shades of Jekyll and Hyde) and, as a dealer, it quickly becomes very obvious, from the rush on back issues, when a title gains favour in fandom. Last year I had boxes full of copies of Marvel Two-In-One; this year I've got less than a handful. In the course of this review I want to try to identify the aspects of MTIO 53-58 which make the title of special interest to fandom, and to appraise those aspects in terms of my personal quality-scale of collectability.

The obvious starting place is that aspect which fandom seizes most immediately upon, the artwork. Certainly the mini-series had the benefit of some very good covers, notably 54 and 55, by Perez, and 56, by Byrne. The most attractive feature of 54 and 55's covers is the beautifully-coloured backgrounds, emerald and violet respectively, which, in addition to making the covers that bit different from most of the rest on the stands, also serves to heighten the dramatic impact of the foreground figures. Whereas the covers of 54 and 55 succeed principally through subtlety and detail, 56's cover succeeds through straightforward action. The pain-contorted face of the Thing (followed closely by the rest of him) hurtling towards the reader is an eye-catcher; simple as that. The cover is also interesting in that it reaffirms Byrne's successful assimilation of the best of Neal Adams, but more of that later. (I'm sure I've seen Adams use a layout very, very similar to that cover --can anybody put me out of my misery and tell me where?)

The internal artwork is pleasing enough, as it should be by two of fandom's favourites. It's especially interesting to make an appraisal of some Byrne (triple Eagle Award Winner) artwork which is not associated with the X-Men. Of the two sets of art (the first three issues are by Byrne, the second three by Perez) I much prefer that by Perez, it being much more detailed, imaginatively laid out, and generally more interesting, complete with a generous batch of special effects. It may be, of course, that Byrne merely provided the rough lay-outs for his issues (something which he's doing more & more, I believe, e.g. with the FF and Captain America), leaving the finished art to his regular FF finisher, Joltless Joe. My main point of unease, however, concerning both artists is that they are examples of the second generation of fan favourites (the first generation was Adams, Smith, Steranko and Wrightson, the third will be Miller, Zeck, Golden et al) who haven't pushed the frontiers of comic book art any further than their mentors did ten years ago. Byrne hasn't accomplished half as much as Adams did; Perez has shown us one way Smith might have developed if he had remained in comics (which really would have been no development at all); Gulacy is a Steranko with more artistic ability but less vision, and so it goes. All of them are (in one sense) a cut above the usual comic-art craftsmen, such as the Buscemas, Swan, or Colan, but it is My Decision that none of them are worth collecting for their artwork alone. Each needs the complement of an interesting story-line to make the whole package worthwhile, which is really what comics are all about. So, the Perez Avengers are worth collecting, but not the Perez FF; the Gulacy Kung Fu issues are worth collecting, but not the Gulacy Morbius; the Byrne X-Men is worth collecting, but not the Byrne FF (the World's Greatest Comic Magazine doesn't seem to be doing too well, does it); but what about the Byrne and Perez MTIO?

My impression of the series was that it had a minimal plot, which served mainly to allow the Thing to encounter various Marvel supporting characters, freshly disinterred from comic-book limbo, and thrash around for a few pages with most of them; all colourful, exciting stuff, and, most importantly, entertaining in a surface sort of way. Many of the more irritating of the Marvel clichés were there. For example, in #53, Ben Grimm, a man who has picked up a couple of degrees, sees someone who looks like his former enemy, the Crusader, standing behind him, so immediately throws a punch -- thereby displaying the mental age of a bad-tempered infant. This is in the middle of a top-security research station, and despite protests from one of the station's directors and Quasar (the character at the receiving end of the punch) himself. Not that Quasar himself deserves any more respect. He's the only person I've seen who stands with his feet four feet apart and in a crouch just to shake hands (see p.7). Then, in true Marvel tradition, he assumes he's being tested. The alternative would have been to assume that the Thing was an impostor. They fight.

Issue 56 provided a few kinky thrills along the lines of female wrestling, in the form of the Kirby-inspired "Thundra's Grapplers", each one with enormous tits and a slinky, sexy costume, except the obligatory butch one, of course.

I would imagine the whole series was lots of fun for Ralph Macchio, and especially continuity-freak Mark Gruenwald, reviving all those disused characters, even fitting most of them out with new costumes and new names, or new-old names in the case of Black Goliath/Giant-Man. The most potentially interesting of these characters is the Aquarian, formerly Wundarr, who, in the best tradition of Jesus and the Stranger in a Strange Land, is going to open the way for a new age, and bring mankind the peace he's found. If he means the sort of peace he's found at Project Pegasus, then we can look forward to some more action-filled issues.

The plot itself consisted of five issues of build-up, in the form of diversions (all the battles), bits and pieces of machinery being smuggled in, and dark mutterings from Dr Lightner, followed by the one issue wherein it all happens and is dealt with. This could be seen as the new style of pacing, which allows for the development of even minor characters, such as Quasar and Giant-Man, and which keeps the reader hooked, ensuring he buys not just one or two issues of the title, but six. Or it could be seen as padding, obtaining as much mileage as possible from one basic idea. Plot development differs from padding in that in the former, the main story actually gets somewhere; you are wiser at the end of the issue than you were at the beginning, even if the characters just move from one location to another, that at least is a very elementary form of progress. But in the Pegasus saga, five-sixths of the story consisted of diversion. Why not spread the story over a whole year, and have eleven issues worth of diversion? Just think of all the old characters which could have been introduced then: ex-Avengers, ex-Champions, guest-stars galore, and still only the final issue, wherein everything happens and is wrapped up, would have been really essential.

Still, it's done my Two-In-One sales a world of good. -Steve McGregor

AUDIENCE REACTION

In order to prevent confusion, the MoI answering method will not be used on MoI letters - all will be answered in the usual Bem manner. Back to normal next issue.

Letters of comment to Bem + MoI have been mixed freely - and in some cases where a person has written to both, comments on each may be in the same letter - though we'll make a clear indication when a letter shifts from one to the other. Okay?

All comments, unless indicated otherwise, are by Dave Harwood. - MT

Steven J. Green

The one thing that has become painfully obvious when debating the "comics fandom vs. sf fandom" controversy in Bem is the widespread ignorance among comic fans of the way sf fandom is organised and, more importantly, the way that its membership relates to it. Even the mighty Mike Cruden seems no exception, if his comments in Bem 30 are to be believed.

Sure, there's a certain amount of "in-joke silliness" in evidence, but to give the impression that cliquishness is the order of the day is extremely misleading. As for "pedantic, over-serious theorizing", what pedantic, over-serious theorizing? I can't remember seeing anything along those lines lately, and I've been at every major UK sf con since last last summer (no wonder my bank manager keeps giving me dirty looks..), the last two (and a third by the time you read this) with Phil Greenaway and Kevin Stubbs, so there's no need just to take my word for it. And to come away "bored silly" either proves an extremely under-developed sense of fun (something I find difficult to accept) or that Mike's use of the word "brief" when describing his brush with sf fandom is an extreme understatement. /(I'd assumed Mike was referring to sf fanzines, and if so I would echo his remarks. "Vector" would be a good example, albeit possibly atypical. But then, though I enjoy reading sf, I'm not keen on reading about it.)/

There are glaring differences between the two fandoms, and they are never more obvious than at conventions. Freed from the restrictions of a no-alternative programme (ie: either follow it or sod off back to your room), sf fans can make the convention a personal experience, playing the entire weekend (or, in the case of Seacon, five days) by ear. When you compare that with the 1979 Comicon, the conclusions do comics fandom no credit.

To answer John Murphy: having "businessmen" organise cons for us is the last thing any intelligent fan would advocate. Christ, it's the only thing we have left that hasn't become contaminated by the professionals. But if you want to throw your money away at that kind of faceless, multi-media rip-off, try Project Starcast in 1982 - it sounds like just the kind of thing you're looking for.

The Comicon is little more than an extended mart with a few guests thrown in, and it will remain that way until comics fandom gets off its butt and makes a genuine attempt to become involved in the running of its own events. The programme at the '79 Con. had virtually no relevence to comicdom's fannish element, other than Colin's own generosity in providing a free fanzine table. Unfortunately, I won't be able to make the Marvel-backed effort, but I doubt that there'll be any notable improvements in the situation. Maybe they'll prove me wrong, but the odds are against it. /(Knocking comicons is a popular pastime among fans, but no-one ever seems to actually do anything to improve the situation. Talk is cheap and all that. Personally I'd be quite content with an 'extended mart' since the only appeal Cons have for me is the chance to do a bit of socialising.)/

Moving on to Chuck Connors' comments, Phil's passing remark about the high degree of organisation at Seacon (but in no way restrictive, I might add) was not based upon his own experiences at Brighton (he didn't attend) but on those of fans like myself who did. And if efficient programming and a wide range of possible activities to choose from means a Con. is "too bloody Americanized", then I reckon it's about time I changed my nationality. Sure, Seacon and Albacon were big - they were meant to be, for Chrissake - but I'd be intrigued to know on what evidence Chuck bases his statement on them being too large for "quite a lot of tastes". Really? Care to illuminate me, Chuck -- or are you guessing? If so, it's a lousy guess, and adds little credence to an argument already weakened by the fact that when it comes to Comicons, you don't know what the hell you're talking about. /(Chuck merely offered his opinions - ones which I've heard several other attendees voice - and these are just as valid as yours. He never professed any knowledge of Comicons.)/

As for Ian Abrahams and TAFF, the fund is just like everything else in sf fandom: only what you make of it. And if you don't feel like contributing the odd 50p to see someone like Dave Langford or Jim Barker (or preferably both) representing UK fandom at one of the US cons, you don't have to, but for some fans this kind of second-hand experience is the only kind they're ever going to be able to afford, and surely you're not suggesting that the idea should be scrapped just because you don't happen to like it. Still, should ever the day arrive when someone accidentally puts your name down on the TAFF ballot, we can look forward to the spectacle of you declining the invitation on principle, right, Ian? Or is that an unfair question?

Kathleen Glancy

Masters of Infinity 5 featured one of the most thought-provoking covers of 1980 - indeed, the only one that bears comparison is Brian Bolland's Batman/Catwoman cover for Bem. I mean, you can almost hear what the characters are saying, or even thinking. Red Sonja, for instance, is saying "indecent exposure!!? Indecent exposure!!!! You have the nerve to criticise the way other people dress?" Captain Atom is surveying Sonja's cleavage and thinking "Cor!" Superman is also surveying Sonja's cleavage and thinking "Damn useful thing, X-ray vision". The Hulk is muttering "Hulk going to smash funny little red and blue bug." The Spider is confessing "Yes, it's true, I really am a renegade expatriate vulcan. They threw me out for stealing things and smiling." And Hawkeye is propositioning Black Canary. "See, I can get a big picture right there on the cover, and he lets himself be flung out of the JLA in favour of a turkey with his hair on fire. I can shoot just as straight as he can. I, too, have always been kinky for black fishnet. So how about it? He's got nothing I haven't except the beard, and I could grow one of them if you like. How about it, huh?" To which she replies "You are also just as loud-mouthed as he is. So why should I change when it would be just the same? Go try the Black Widow, old no-#### has just thrown her over again! Very interesting indeed. /(Ms. K, you are in grave danger of becoming one of the sweetest ladies I've never met! Incidentally, the Hulk/Atom and Hawkeye/BC interchanges were exactly as I envisaged them.)/

(Bem)

Isn't it odd how tastes differ? CN Padgett, who is I am sure a normal and intelligent person, thinks Kitty Pryde is "an excellent character". I think she's a stench in the nostrils. I would certainly agree that some of the moments in X-men 139 were "precious" - but I don't think CN and I would be using the word in the same sense. I mean, had I wanted to read about cutsie pie 13-year old genii attending ballet lessons I need never have given up the June and School Friend. I can't stand Kitty Pryde. Prose fails me, but as everyone knows:

I do not love the Wolverine
I do not love his surly mien
I find his character obscene
Yet if he sank his claws inside
The beating heart of Kitty Pryde/
Until the ghastly brat had died
Then to him I would take a shine
And cry "Ah be my valentine,
Dear Wolvie of the claws divine
Aye, Logan, if in future scene
You slew the disneyesque pre-teen
Then, then I'd love the Wolverine

/ I thought that I would never see
A name more absolutely twee
Than 'Ariel', but 'Sprite' is. Gee!

/(Jolly thought for the day: if Kitty Pryde ages at the usual super-hero rate, she should be all of 14 years old by 1990!)/

I want to make it clear that the information on the anatomy of ducks quoted by Chris Ash was not just dropped out of the blue. It was part of an argument against the plausibility of the Howard/Beverly relationship, and as such served a rational purpose. I got the information, in case anyone was wondering, from a friend's veterinary textbook. And I don't know how the hell they measured it either. /(Ah, but Howard is an evolved duck; he has hands, the lady ducks on Duckworld have boobs (God only knows why), so maybe he has other - er, 'hidden talents' too?)/

I publicly apologise to Len Wein and Paul

Levitz. I should have known the Pepper Potts clone was just too cliched to be real. I must be slipping.

I can see it now, when Mo and I meet. Maureen/Kathleen - "Hello. How do you do? I'm fine, thank you. Isn't it nice to meet at last. Yes, wasn't Avengers 200 disgusting? And X-Men 137? It's a conspiracy against powerful women, that's what. Let's go and have a drink."

But we do differ a little. She thought The Silver Surfer might have been the father of Ms. Marvel's baby whereas I think his trunks are welded on to him. After all, he never eats normally and Galactus probably never considered whether he might need to remove them for other reasons.

Chris Ash

(MoI) You realise you're breaking all the known ground rules of British fanzines? If you have decent-quality paper, you don't have 4-colour covers; and if you do have such covers, they should never be printed in correct registration; and, if you do achieve a combination of those 3 elements, you don't stay in business. Rules, of course, were made to be broken.

I was also pleased to note a generally higher standard of drawing than one tends to find in either Bem or The Comics Journal (which consistently lets itself down with cruddy visuals). However, the higher the quality, the more easily one notices the occasional flaw. I get the impression RDH drew the cover more quickly than he would have liked, as I know he could have realised Captain Atom's arms more deftly than that. Incidentally, this is the first time I can recall anyone pointing out the obvious debt Mar-vell's costume designer owes to Captain Atom's. /(Possibly because many fans have never seen the original CA, obviously the inspiration for Firestorm as well as the latter-day Mar-vell.)/

I was going to say Mark Farmer's art looks extremely adept for a fanzine, but that almost sounds derogatory. It's actually considerably better than a lot of the stuff that (for instance) Jim Warren published between the original EC-style Warrens and the influx of Spanish artists. Given that Farmer has expended so much effort on this audition for Continuity Associates, it becomes even more tragic that his art-work should have been diminished so by the effects of the lettering. If ever this strip is picked up by an American publisher (and it could be), I fervently hope that Mark will be allowed to re-letter it himself.

The article on Chaykin reminded me of a programme on BBC 2 many years ago (was it called 'THE EDITORS'?) which featured a film report on one of Nick Landau's early London marts and a fascinating interview with Frank Bellamy. The film crew followed a particular fan through the mart (are you still out there, Sir?) and asked him what his preferences were. The fan revealed that he had just started collecting the complete works of Howie Chaykin, a then-recent arrival in comics. This mystified me at the time, but the sort of adulation expressed by such people as Messrs Pierce is more puzzling still. I have nothing against Chaykin's painting style, but the sort of characteristics endemic to his drawing style contain few of the elements which, one would have thought, attract people to comic art in the first place.

Am I the only person who finds Chaykin's style difficult to appreciate?/(No, there are at least two of us. In my case it's his inking style that troubles me the most)/

Ivo Steyn

Strangely enough, every time you produce a bigger Bem than usual I finish reading it sooner than usual too. Is this some obscure case of the law of diminishing returns?

I'm beginning to like "H.M.S.Conqueror" (rather bloodthirsty name, by the way) very much. Stephen Baskerville's artwork had one puzzling quality: it looked like the design of a bas-relief. Figures had this strangely dramatic aura over them, just like the figures in medieval tapestry or Egyptian reliefs. A really nice effect, and one that makes me wonder just how strong the tie between comics and their remote ancestors, the sequential bas-reliefs, really is. It's a pity I don't know enough from art history to be a judge of this, bit I think comics (with their age-old theme of hero-oriented fantasy) are more closely related to those early examples of pictorial storytelling than we usually care to think. /(I try not to think about it at all, since I regard this entire thesis as a load of nonsense. However, if you want a good so-called 'example', I refer you to the Assyrian wall carvings in the British museum - they come complete with a full text written across them!)/

About sf fandom vs. comics fandom: so far, every comic fan I've spoken to or corresponded with had read a fairly huge number of sf books, certainly enough to qualify him/her as an sf fan. Are we sure we're talking about two distinct groups of people here, or is comic fandom just a subset of sf fandom? /(Some sf fans think so, and indeed we owe sf fandom much in terms of structure - fanzines, Cons etc - but otherwise the two fandoms are quite distinct)/ As for the relative merits of an sf con, well, if Jack Vance shows up for BeNeLuxCon '81 I'll certainly go there to listen and/or talk to him but, frankly, I don't really feel a need to communicate with other sf fans. Among comic fans there are huge differences in taste, but the sf fans I've spoken to nearly started throttling me when I didn't agree with their glorious evaluation of the merits of a particular book/writer. The comic fans I know impress me as a lot more tolerant. I'll stress that this is just my personal experience, but I know enough about sampling theory to make me wonder about the sanity of the average 'Hard-core' sf fan,

And now, a moment of confusion. I was going to fill this paragraph with a relentlessly logical argument about how the pages of "Neverwhere" are eminently suited as wallpaper, how Corben's integrity and Neverwhere's adult interest are both adequately described by the number zero and how Mike must have been hit with a waffle iron just prior to reading Neverwhere. In short, an argument so scathingly, devastatingly persuasive that the combination of the names "Cruden" and "Neverwhere" would have evoked sniggers for the next thirty years. But. Since it seems silly to waste this perfectly good rant on Mike's unsuspecting successor and since I can fairly well understand Mike's point of view anyway I'll let sleeping dogs lie, save to point out one of Mike's better jokes in his comment on my last letter: "Did you find the violence in "the Deerhunter" unnecessarily gruesome, or the sex in "Coming Home"?" Think about this sentence.

(MoI)

The part of MoI 5 that impressed me most was 'Oink'. God, I could write books, no, trilogies about my attempts to 'convert people' to a more sympathetic view of comics. And take it from me, Kev, you got off easy!

Most recent of my "comics are ok" campaign victims is fellow college student Mariia (yes, two 'i's). I started with McGregor's "Panther's Rage" story from Jungle Action. Reaction: "Over-wordy,pretentious twaddle". Second attempt: The Starlin Warlock stories (from Strange Tales #178 to Two-in-one annual #2). "Wish he'd draw the thighs right. otherwise mildly entertaining". Barely pausing for breath I brought out the big guns: Moench/Gulacy Master of Kung Fu (the Mordillo and Fu Manchu multiparters)."Competent spy stories. Interesting how he manages to tell two stories on one page. Terrible dialogue though." Sensing victory, I tried McKenzie/Miller Daredevils, O'Neill/Adams & Englehart/Rogers Batman, a few selected Claremont/Byrne X-Men and even the Moench/Sienkiewicz Moon Knight Marvel Preview book. She wasn't impressed. You know what finally got her, which comics finally got her to say: "This I like, you got any more of these?". Fantastic Four #57-60, the "Doc Doom steals Cosmic Powers of Silver Surfer" story. Honest to God.

Net result: one newly converted comic fan who's plundering my collection for Lee/Kirby Thors even as I write this, and the realisation that Stan Lee & Jack Kirby really are (or were) geniuses./(Or it may be that those FFs/Thors were the nearest in style to the knockabout 'kiddie comix' your friend probably read as a child. I just wonder why you bothered in the first place; does it matter that the world is full of people who don't like comics?)/

Meerten Welleman

I would very much like to comment on your NEWS COLUMN of Bem 29. In that particular column you mentioned that certain colour work by Don Lawrence in the French comic magazine CIRCUS is from IPC.

Unfortunately for IPC this is not the case. The colour work Mal Burns mentioned is from the strip STORM, created four years ago for the Dutch comic juvenile EPPO, as

a follow-up for THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. When EPPO was originated, it featured THE TRIGAN EMPIRE alongside Asterix, Luc Orient, Blueberry, Lucky Luke and a few of their own productions. Through the years their own productions became more and more important. At a certain moment it was decided that THE TRIGAN EMPIRE had to make way for a SF-strip of a different character. Don Lawrence and scripter Saul Dunn were asked to do the job and work out the character of STORM.

Don Lawrence recently finished his seventh episode of STORM. This particular episode was, incidentally, scripted by Kelvin Gosnell. Other episodes were scripted by Dutch writer-artists Martin Lodewijk and Dick Matena.

In the early days of EPPO, three other British artists used to work for them as well, namely Harry Bishop, Sydney Jordan, and Paul Neary. Sydney and Paul did a SF-story called Hal Starr, which remains unfinished and unpublished to this day.

Presently, Leo Baxendale (with Willie the Kid) works for Eppo as well.

Apart from the magazine EPPO, the publisher, Oberon, publishes a large number of comic strip albums with Dutch, French, Italian, American, and British material. Apart from the strips fro girls, the British comics include THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, OLAC THE GLADIATOR, KARL THE VIKING, BILLY BUNTER, BILLY'S BOOTS AND ROY OF THE ROVERS.

Simon Russell

Once more The Eagles are on the wing; once more they fly to battle, again to struggle with their ancient foe, The Pass. A choice of three will give the favourite writer/artist/inker out of those three, it will not give fandom's favourite. A choice of six will make the result slightly more realistic since the regular "big three", ie. Perez/Buscema/Byrne or Claremont/Thomas/Englehart will lose some votes to the newcomers. This would be twice as representative of fandom's views. But the only way to get a truly accurate result is to dispense with the preliminary ballot altogether. Unlimited choice would surely give unquestionable results, no? (Of course, one of the big three would certainly win in any case...) /(Yes, but at least the reduced margin of victory would place their popularity in more accurate perspective. I've never understood the need for a 'nominating ballot' either.)/

When I started on Les Chester's article, I feared we were in for a word-for-word re-write of the Amazing World of DC Comics piece. Fortunately, once Les began to talk about Adam Strange those shadows were dispersed by a blazing light of originality and the article came to life. Quite a chunky Bem, all in all.

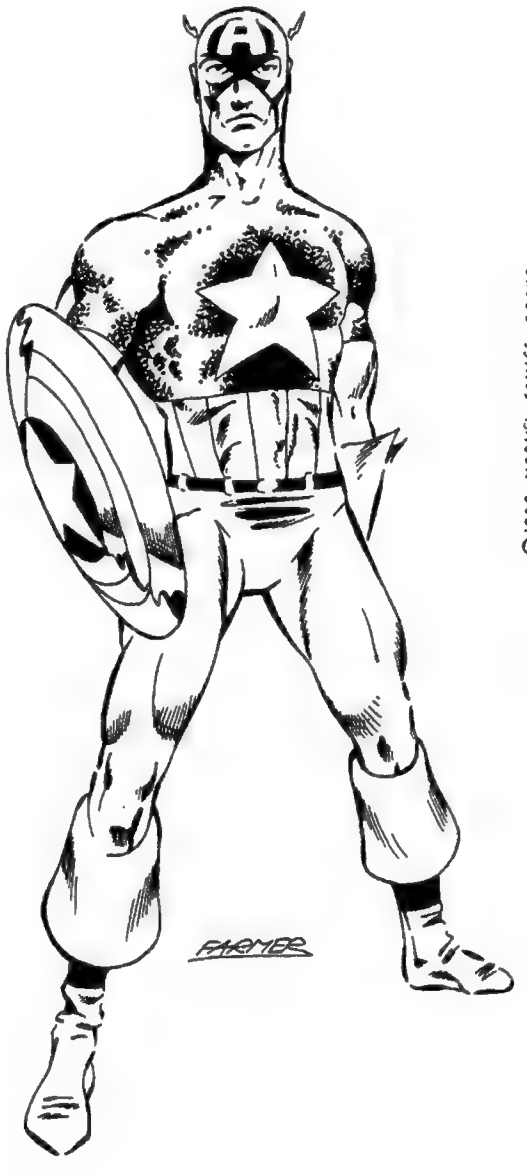
Gerald Midgely

Yet another thought-provoking MoI. Kev Langley's absolutely right when he says that the literary content of graphic novels such as SABRE can't compare with classics such as A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN. He's also right in saying that the visual side of a graphic novel limits some forms of subtle expression. However, where I feel he's wrong is in making a literary comparison in the first place: Comix must be considered as a seperate medium, differentiated from both fine art and literature. /(Spot on!)/ While there are things that comics can't accomplish, there are also areas that belong solely to this medium: As an example, the atmosphere generated in the Brendan McCarthy strip "The Eyes of JFK (a statement of intent)" in CIPHER #3 simply couldn't be replicated in any other form.

Nick Hay's idea that it would be disadvantageous for comics to gain respectability was interesting, although I'm not sure that I agree with him. Respectability in this context is the established view of art: a 'good' piece of work, in whatever medium, being one which has more than just superficial impact (admittedly a gross simplification). If you agree with this definition and actually want comix to become an art form, then the road to respectability will be an inevitable consequence of achieving that aim: To keep comix out of the respectability bracket would mean actively propagating non-artistic elements and repressing artistic ones. The only way out is if you either propose a new definition of art, or you clearly differentiate between those strips which are basically entertainment and those which are something more (which has happened with film, only one side of the medium having gained artistic respectability). /(The problem, surely, is how to widen the audience for comics, thus creating a market for more adult and/or experimental material. Respectability per se is not a particularly worthwhile aim)/

Nick, you cite PIL as having only an "elite minority" following. When something gains artistic credibility, does this automatically limit its audience? Can 90% of the population be considered uneducated in matters concerning art, or do we need a new definition? /(The answers are yes, yes, and, what's the old definition?)/

I found your statement, Dave, that you weren't really interested in strip-zines rather surprising. As a professional, you know yourself the limitations imposed on creative expression by commercially orientated comic companies. /(Not personally, no. But that's because my chosen approach is pretty straight-forward anyway. Generally, I think 'commercial limitations' are more of a 'problem' for writers than artists.)/ Surely one of the functions of strip-zines is to provide a format where more of these restrictions need apply. You may argue back saying that in reality, strip-zines present pieces which are really only second-rate copies of professional strips - that may have been true a year ago, but certainly not now. In the last few months there have been a number of writers and artists, operating mainly through strip-zines, who've formulated a 'new approach' to comix based on their mutual desire to have the medium recognised as an art (I would count you, Mike, in this group - am I right? /(Um, I dunno. When working for fanzines, I'm certainly not interested in producing copies (2nd rate or otherwise) of mainstream comics - MT)/ This movement is really only just starting (with about three magazines featuring experimental work of this nature at the moment) but is gathering momentum as it gets more exposure. /(Such aims are commendable, albeit by no means new - if only the results matched the writers'/artists' ambitions! I haven't the space to provide a more complete answer; that must wait until the next MoI, when I can get back to writing LoCs of my own.)/



THIS IS A DIGITAL FACIMILE OF THE ORIGINAL FANZINE.
COPYRIGHT REMAINS WITH THE ORIGINAL ARTISTS,
AUTHORS, COMPANIES AND PUBLISHERS.
NOT FOR RESALE OR INCLUSION IN ANY
COMMERCIAL VENTURE

COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE

Lyndhurst Hall, Warden Road, London, N.W.3.

Saturday January 3rd

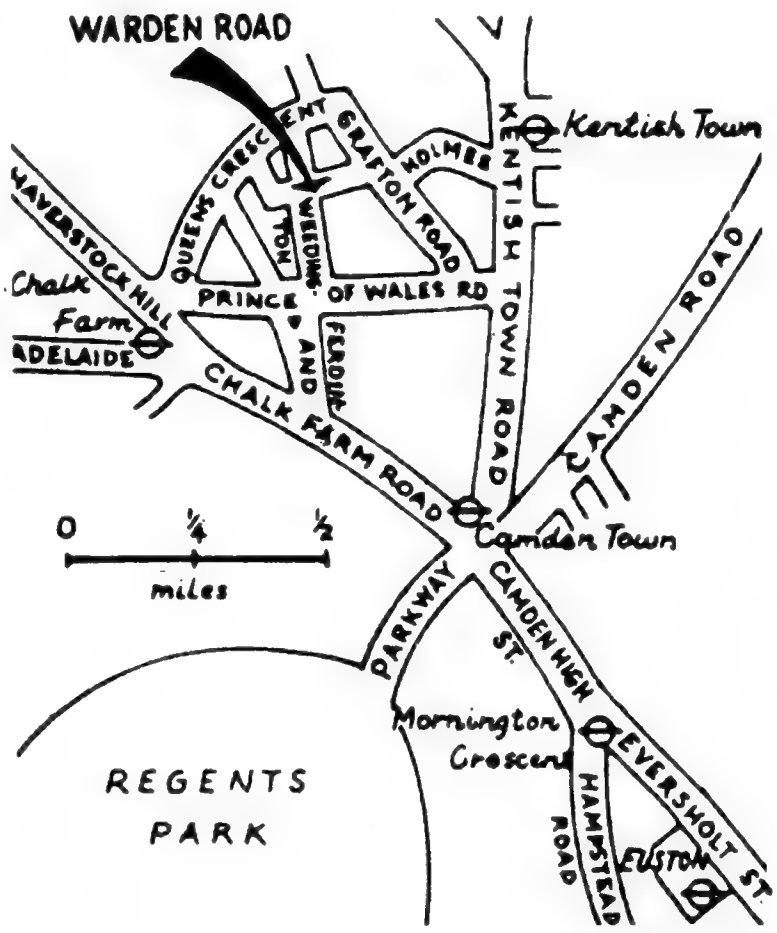
STARTS 12 NOON

The Comicbook Marketplace, not only the place to pick up all those hard to find back issues and latest imports, but also somewhere where you can meet fellow fans and see friends. If you hate marts that are vast and impersonal then the Marketplace is for you.

©1980 Marvel Comics Group

Come along to the Comicbook Marketplace on January 3rd, we will have nearly forty tables packed with over 100,000 comicbooks, black & white and colour magazines, fanzines, art portfolios, and many other comics related items from Britain's top comics dealers.

Comicbook Marketplace is presented by: Fantasy Domain



HOW TO GET THERE Underground: Chalk Farm, Camden Town, or Kentish Town. Bus: 3, 29, 31, 53, 74, 253 to Camden Town. 27, 134, 137, 214 to Kentish Town Road. 24, 46, 68 to Prince of Wales Road.

COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE DATES FOR 1981

January 3rd, February 28th, May 2nd, July 25th, Further dates will be announced shortly. All dates and venue subject to change.

Barry K. Winetrobe May I reply to the accusations of 'editor apathy' made by Nige Edwards and Simon Russell? /(Sure you can, Barry.)/

I seem to have been accused (at least indirectly) by Simon of not writing a cheery note when sending off a copy of VERTIGO. I don't have my VERTIGO sub lists with me at present to check, but if I did fail to do more than send a bare issue of my 'zine to him, then I apologise.

However, as to 'editor apathy' in general, can I attempt to rebut it by citing my own situation over the past few months. I'm not doing this by way of excuse-making or to incite sympathy, merely to explain what was impractical to explain to Vertigo readers earlier.

I had issue 9 all prepared and ready to type up in the early summer. However, my co-editor, Geoff Lindsey, then vanished to university in Los Angeles, and I had to begin a long and often-fruitless search for post-university employment. The production of VERTIGO 9 became impossible. I moved house several times, eventually arriving here in Cardiff, and inevitably much of the VERTIGO material has been mislaid. At present I must admit that I feel I should spend more time preparing for my baptism in lecturing here at the University than producing another issue of a fanzine. To cap it all, regular VERTIGO readers may have noticed the frequent changes of editorial address (inevitable if a fan-ed is a student); Most of my VERTIGO mail is forwarded to me, but this is not always so.

To conclude, may I say that when it became clear that VERTIGO wouldn't appear, at least for a long while, I decided it would be only fair to return all subscription money. This Geoff and I did. And we wrote a personal, handwritten letter (if necessarily brief) to all subscribers, explaining the situation! I would think subscribers would prefer a refund to (a) a promise of future issues "sometime", (b) transfer of subscription without prior consultation, or (c) no word at all from the ex-fan-ed./(Yeah.... there are a couple of other fan-eds who spring to mind who might do well to follow your example)/

On a more cheerful note, I hope to produce a special (and probably final) issue of VERTIGO early in the new year, which will include interviews (already prepared) with Neal Adams & Marshall Rogers.

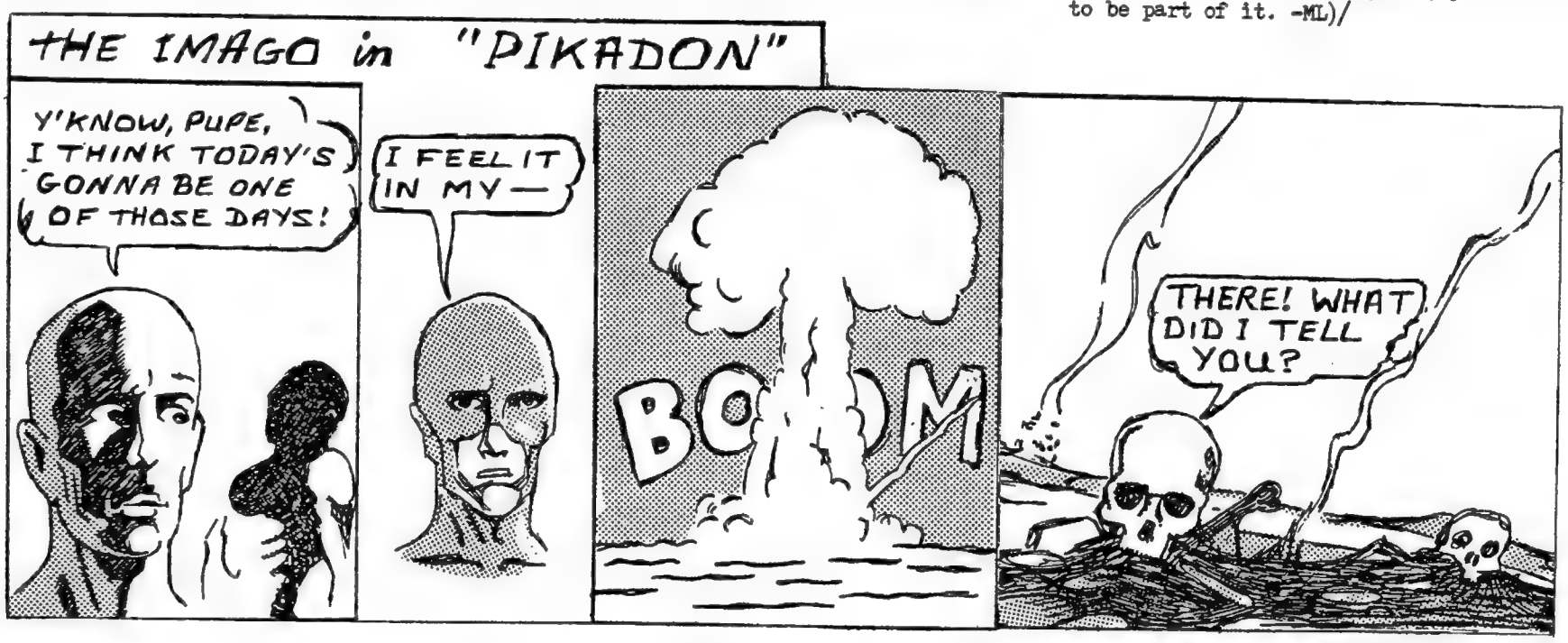
Ian Abrahams I note with some distress that fandom has been infiltrated by people who don't follow the traditional rules of the game, ie Simon Russell. Over the last 40 years it has been traditional for all people who comment/respond to a fanzine to find themselves subscriberless. /(The practice of sending out complementary copies for printed LoCs, as opposed to art, articles etc, is not traditional in comics fandom, but actually a relatively recent innovation.

be sent freebies. Due to a demoralising move towards materialist presentation by comics fnz this has been more like a free copy on publication of your response. Any further attempts to deny fans of their right to free copies of their published work will quite rightly be resisted by those who see this as a further erosion of friendliness between fans. Mr Russell says there is no law which says you have to send free copies. His total ignorance of the effect of fandom's traditional unspoken laws is appalling and detrimental to the continuation of fandom as a circle of friends interested in comics. He further insults fan artists whose "doodles" may represent a lot of painstaking work. However, I fully endorse his closing paragraph. Although it is easy to forget to stick in a note with some subscribers copies of fnz, it should not be the norm. Fanzines which ignore common courtesy are liable to I find it saddening that some fans, like you, have come to expect a 'reward' for the genuinely traditional, and wholly voluntary, practice of LoC writing.)/

John Gatehouse brings up an interesting point about the X-Men. The only reason the X-Men have won many sections of our supposedly illustrious presentation scheme is that they have got more fan exposure that MoKF or Iron Man. The truth of the matter is that a minority group called the X-Men fan club is busy publishing 'zines and distributing Eagle ballots (am I correct or not that they distributed some?) in some silly attempt to push the X-Men to the fore front of fan attention. God knows why, perhaps they want to sell more 'Cerebro'? People are having their opinions swayed by the club's attempts to prove some thing intrinsically "arty" about the comic. I think a lot of floating votes are influenced into voting for the X-Men just because there is an X-Men club. /(You're saying that many fans are incapable of making up their own minds? Surely a bias towards the X-Men is the reason they joined the club in the first place.)/

However, there is a much darker side to the club and that is that it is unconsciously pushing up prices by making it look to dealers as though it is a modern Shakespearian work of art. As an example, X-Men 106, up at least 500% on last year's prices. The X-Men is the only comic that has rocketed in the UK, and need I point out it is the only one with a fan club? Pressuring fans into buying comics (ie by articles in the Overstreet Price Guide) is another example.

While on the subject, I will not renew my sub because of several underlying trends in the club. Case 1; Geoff titles himself 'publisher + editor'. He is in fact only editor, and the publisher is the X-Men fan club which is (or should be) owned by the 150 members who each pay £3.00 to aid its projects as a co-operative group. Case 2; They have a survey (issue 8) in which is asked should their X-index be issued seperately. The vote is 58.3% saying no. So Geoff goes and issues it seperately! Geoff asks about news/reviews in which there is no majority decision, so instead of re-asking more specifically, he decides in favour of a fanzine review column! I praise the club for trying to get fans involved, but it seems to be that their voice is unheeded. Of course, I would write to CEREBRO with this but I understand that they operate a policy of banning non-members from their pages! /(Geoff founded and developed the club, and puts a great amount of work into it -- I'm sure it takes more than £3 a year of his own money to keep it running. The club's success is due to his efforts, and the popularity of the X-Men; one can't "blame" the club for the popularity of the comic, and the consequent Eagle results. It's no good sniping at the club from outside; if you want to change it, you'll have to be part of it. -ML)/

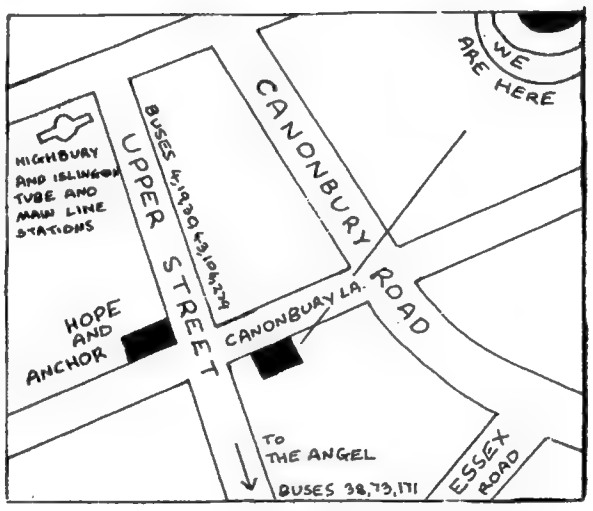


FANTASY UNLIMITED THE SHOP

21,CANONBURY LANE,
ISLINGTON,
LONDON N.1

OPEN MONDAY TO SATURDAY
11 a.m. - 6.30 p.m.

JUST TEN MINUTES FROM CENTRAL LONDON,YOU'LL FIND US EASILY ACCESSILLE - A SHORT WALK FROM HIGHBURY AND ISLINGTON TUBE STATION,ON THE VICTORIA LINE.SO WHEN YOU'RE 'DOING THE COMIC SHOPS' IN LONDON, YOU'VE NO EXCUSE FOR MISSING US!



AND WE'RE SURE YOU'LL FIND THE VISIT WORTHWHILE - WE SPECIALISE IN COMICS,AND DON'T RELY ON ALL THE RELATED EPHEMERA (AND SOME NOT SO RELATED) THAT OTHER 'COMIC' SHOPS FILL THEIR SHELVES WITH.BECAUSE OF THIS,WE HAVE TO MAINTAIN EXTENSIVE STOCKS OF MARVELS,D.C.S, GOLDEN AGE AND FIFTIES,WARREN,BRITISH MARVEL WEEKLIES,2000 AD,EAGLE, TV21,BEANO,DANDY,BRITISH REPRINTS,AND MUCH MORE.IF YOU CAN'T VISIT US,YOU CAN RING ON 01 - 359 8329 OR SEND S.A.E. FOR OUR LATEST MAIL ORDER CATALOGUE.YOU CAN ALSO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR CATALOGUES - 6 FOR £1. AND OF COURSE WE DO BUY COMICS - WE'RE ALWAYS INTERESTED IN OLD MARVELS AND D.C.S (PRE 1975 APPROX.),ND ISSUES,AND CAN OFFER TOP PRICES FOR No.1s AND GOLDEN AGE/FIFTIES,AND ESPECIALLY TV21 COMICS. RING US FOR A QUOTE OR SEND A LIST (IF IT'S A COLLECTION) FOR OFFER.

The COMICOLLECTOR'S COMPANION & PRICE GUIDE

Volume Two
DC Comics

ALAN AUSTIN

£1.50

NOW AVAILABLE!

The one ESSENTIAL British fan publication.

Sixty-four pages crammed with information - values of all DC comics from the 1950s to present in good,fine and mint condition,including for the first time pre-distributed issues like the early Showcase (Flash,Adam Strange etc.),Lois Lane,Flash,Brave & the Bold,Mystery in Space, Strange Adventures,Superman,Batman and so on; complete listings of the following artists' work: Adams,Wrightson,Rogers,Starlin,Kirby,Ditko, Nasser,Wood,Frazetta,Al Williamson,Golden and Byrne; accurate details of the many scarce and ND issues; lists of virtually all heroes' appearances,and back-up features; and plenty of other trivia.

Once you've got it,you'll wonder how you ever did without it.

The price is £1.50 post free (and you'll get a copy of our latest mail order catalogue),make your cheque or P.O. payable to Fantasy Unlimited and send it to Fantasy Unlimited

Michael O' Donoghue

I hardly think that the X-Men clean-up in the Eagle Awards is just a product of blind fanaticism. There are far superior mags agreed, eg, Sabre and Cerebus, yet these are not readily available to the vast majority of voters thus limiting the choice in the American section to the two main companies, Marvel + DC. All taken into consideration, the best contemporary mainline mag is the X-Men.

Look at the competition. Since the departure of Englehart and Rogers, DC have little that rises above their superficial norm. /(They don't need it, since their norm is much higher than Marvel's anyway.)/ With Marvel, Iron Man suffers through art deficiencies one issue and plot inadequacies the next. Daredevil falls down on scripting despite its innovative art. MoKF, although as a long time fan it pains me to say this, is not a viable rival. Gene Day's inks do not complement the subtleties of the script. Moench's stories have become hackneyed to the point of becoming chores to read. /(Haven't you just contradicted yourself?)/ What is left then is the X-Men, which has had 31 issues of high quality art and imaginative stories. I'm not being blindly loyal to the Claremont/Byrne/Austin team, just honest.

Another topic kicked around in Bem has been the crap sprouted about the comparisons of SF and comic fandoms. There is no comparison because SF is bigger in popular culture than comics will ever be.

To start with, SF has been around a lot longer than comics (as we know them), in fact since the 1920's with the pulps and before with such classics as War of the Worlds. Because of this, SF has had longer to attract a following, and through its durability has garnered greater respectability than comics. This greater acceptance is also due to the just claim that SF is a more mature fiction than comics. The great majority of comics, for economic reasons, must appeal to the younger reader. SF books are not spoiled by obligatory fight scenes as mainline comics are.

SF is far larger and popular due also to the number of different media it reaches other than books. There is TV, Radio, Cinema and even Theatre. There's LP's and Comics.. Comics could be seen as a spin-off from SF, just refer to Bem 30's DC article. /(Give me strength! If you must resort to such wild generalisation, Michael, at least get your facts right. Comics have existed in recognisable form since the late 19th century. Comic characters have featured in all the media you cite - hell, even Buck Rogers is a comic strip character. I agree SF is, now, probably more 'respectable' than comics, but certainly not for the non-reasons you give.)/

Howard Leroy Davis

"Oink" triggers some thoughts. (Thank you, Kev Langley!) My personal crusade involves the recognition of comic work as an art form. As a result, I critique comics - I don't review them.

Since Americans in general regard comics more highly than Britons, and since I am a grey-haired, 45 year old, I seldom get the head-pat reaction Kev got.

The other way I avoid the head-pat is by recognising that comics are not great literature. Never intended to be. Never will be. They are a unique story-telling medium which weds words and pictures. Besides the obvious point of having an interesting story to tell, a comic book should be judged on the interface between the art and the text.

Rather than SABRE, which was a pretentious attempt to reach an adult audience (and was successful in the main, you would be better off waving a good mainstream comic under the nose of the friend you want to impress.

The H.H.Harold novel issue of TOMB OF DRACULA leaps to mind. I remember it as I based a lecture on it. Re-examine it. The weather portrayed is part of the story. Throughout the book, the shape and size of panels that Gene Colan used were significant. Examine the placement of elements within the panels, check Marv Wolfman's text for adjectives.

And there are many more good comics to use to discuss our favourite story-telling medium.

Kenny Penman

Masters of Infinity #5 was first class. It was the first issue I'd seen so let me give some general impressions - obviously it is somewhat like Bem, right down to Oink being Katholicity,

ER - I SUPPOSE ENOUGH TIME'S PASSED SO THAT IT WON'T MATTER IF I ADMIT THAT A LOT O'THE STUFF IN MY BOOK EVEN WENT OVER MY HEAD!
Mike Collins
©1980 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

(although it does not suffer from Ms Glancy's all too frequent high-handedness) and the format of the letters pages being almost identical. This can hardly be a criticism; it is merely a logical adoption of all the things Martin has done right in the past, and the 'zine gains from this indirect experience. /(That's unusual. We did in fact go out of our way to try to develop a different LoC answering system in order to avoid being like Bem - apparently it wasn't enough. Sigh.

Oh, by the way, I've always likened Kev Langley's particular brand of mental deformity to K.Williams' Sigh myself - Heh heh. -MT)/

I think you were right to stress that any Con. is better than none, well, I did think that until I went along. All I can ask is, where was the convention? There were a lot of comics, but little else. I was disappointed. Now I have never been to a Con before so I didn't know what to expect, but this was a shambolic mess and something Marvel should be ashamed of. My sympathy goes out to those who travelled to attend. But maybe I missed the good parts. /(The bar was excellent.)/

The two articles were very good, the better being the Howard Chaykin piece. Whilst I agree that Chaykin is an often misrepresented artist (in terms of the compatibility of his inkers) I think the blame for the Micronauts debacle should lie fairly and squarely on his shoulders. I admit that Milgrom is a less than virtuoso inker, but it seems to me from the lack of content in the pages that Chaykin's breakdowns must have been about the most sketchy ever. In this case all the criticisms of hacking it seem justified, and nothing he says in the Comics Journal or elsewhere will convince me otherwise.

On the subject of 'adult' comics; there's probably not much left to say, but from my memory the only truly adult comics I can think of are Englehart's Captain America. I know all the other contenders like Killraven, Panther, etc have their supporters but they all suffer from one fault; the art is too good. Not that the above books are not written at an adult level, they are. What I am postulating is that the art which makes them 'great' comics (in that it is pretty, or innovative) actually stops them from being 'adult' as the impact of the story is diffused amongst the pyrotechnical wizardry. In other words, the message is somewhat lost due to the tendency to follow the visuals rather than the writing, no matter how excellent it is. Englehart was supposedly lumbered with Buscema (Sal) and Frank Robbins - both less than stimulating artists. But reread those issues and you'll find that the story is easily followed, giving over its full 'adult' theme, ironically because of and not despite the art. The art merely highlights and connects the story (one does not linger on it) whilst the script is lucid and clear without this hindrance.

So would you rather have 'good' or 'adult' comics? /(I don't see the two as mutually exclusive; indeed surely a sophisticated script can only be enhanced by equally sophisticated art. Citing examples is pointless until we can agree on the definition of an 'adult' comic. Personally, and with the odd exception, I only find the art 'distracting' when it's downright awful.)/

Mr Bateman's talking crap in my opinion when he implies that by changing the Panther McGregor was harming the character./(Which is basically a trendy way of saying "I disagree with Mr Bateman.."Is this the way future lettercol discussions will turn out? -MT)/ Sure Kirby's King of the Wakandas is different, but which is the better character in terms of depth, nobility etc? And, as you say Mike, the fact that Kirby returned and ignored 3 years of Don's 'creation' shows a certain ignorance on the man's behalf. Very much a pig-headed, ostritch type reaction; what happened to character evolution anyway? /(But McGregor's Panther didn't sell. Surely Kirby's (admittedly awful) version was, in part, an attempt to make the character more commercially viable? Just the sort of thing Marvelites like to pretend 'their' company doesn't do.)/

David Gryc

I liked the DC science fiction comics review. I never thought much of DC, but I'm now starting to look more closely at what they do. /(And so you should. Confusion he say: Never trust the view of man with myopia; he don't see too good.)/

There's a lack of actual comic talk in Bem. Ok, you have reviews of comics, interviews and a letters page, but the actual discussion of comics is missing. Only Maureen James said anything about one comic story, so what about the rest? For instance, what do you think of the Wolverine's new costume? What do you think of Ka-zar coming back in his own comic, and what about Avengers 200? Did it live up to your expectations? What do you think of the new comics currently coming out (eg Teen Titans, Mystery in Space etc)? Surely it doesn't stop us (the fans) from discussing comics in a comics fanzine. Or are you too upper class to publish that kind of thing? /(We can only print what we receive. What do you think of Wolvie's new costume?)/

Talking of print runs (who is?). What's the percentage sale of Bem? /(Better than Spiderman...)/ How many do you print /(Lots)/ and how many do you actually sell of them? /(Quite a few)/ How many new subsribers do you get each issue?/(Countless hordes.)/

Anyway, Martin, did you enjoy the Con? I do wish that there had been just a little bit more planning for it. /(For a first Marvel Con, arranged at short notice, it was

FORBIDDEN PLANET
23 DENMARK STREET
LONDON WC2 8NN

ADVANCE ORDERS:

Forbidden Planet now has a advance order list. Each month we publish three lists:
1)American comics & F & TV,
2)British comics & F & TV,
3)American and British SF & Fantasy Books and Magazines.
Please send a 1st class stamp to receive more information and lists. The lists feature brand new items that you can order before publication to ensure you get the comics, magazines and books you collect.

The following items are a selection from our catalogue and supplements- we will be posting a new comics catalogue in January,please send a first class stamp for a free copy.

ORDERING INFORMATION.

1) Please pay by cheque or postal order made payable to FORBIDDEN PLANET LTD.
2)Orders will be posted within 21 days of their receipt.
3)Foreign customers:please inquire about postage rates and payment instructions before ordering.
4)Purchases are sent at buyer's risk. If you wish to have your parcel insured or registered,please consult a post office and send the appropriate fee.
5)Prices are subject to change without notice.
6)POSTAGE AND PACKING:All payments must include postage as indicated.

Amount	Postage and Packing
7p to £2	.80p
£2 - £5	£1.25
£5 - £10	£1.50
£10- £15	£1.75
£15- £20	£2.00
over £20	£2.50

BOOKS

ART OF JOHN BYRNE
A book dedicated to today's top comic artist. This 72 page book contains photos interviews and articles by Roger Stern and Chris Claremont and a whole section of Byrne's best artwork. Full colour covers and centrefold. £3.60

*CAPTAIN AMERICA INDEX 8A
The latest in the series, over 100 pages. Packed with cover reproductions from the Golden Age to the present and features on Captain America's origins, his history (plus a look at the Yellow Claw) and the index to Tales of Suspense and Captain America. Topped off with a wraparound Steranko cover, this is one of the best indexes published. £3.25

DETECTIVES INC. DON MC GREGOR & MARSHALL ROGERS
Softcover volume of this long awaited strip, both writer and artist have put alot of thought into the book and it shows. Highly recommended. £4.20

*FRANK FRAZETTA - BOOK 4
At last the brand new Frazetta book is out. Same size/format as previous volumes containing 31 full-colour plates as well as many black and white drawings. The books in this series have sold over 600,000 copies which is not surprising as they are all so magnificent. £3.95

THE GREAT SUPERMAN BOOK: The Complete Encyclopedia by Michael Fleisher.
Hardback devoted to the Superman legend. Over 500 pages,over 450 illustrations, thousands of entries including in depth summaries of every story Superman has appeared in upto the mid-1970's. Over 450,000 words long,the product of 7 years of research. £9.60

LADY LUCK
Reprints of sixteen complete stories of this great strip, most by Klaus Nordling. They are reprinted from the original art and are superb. £3.60

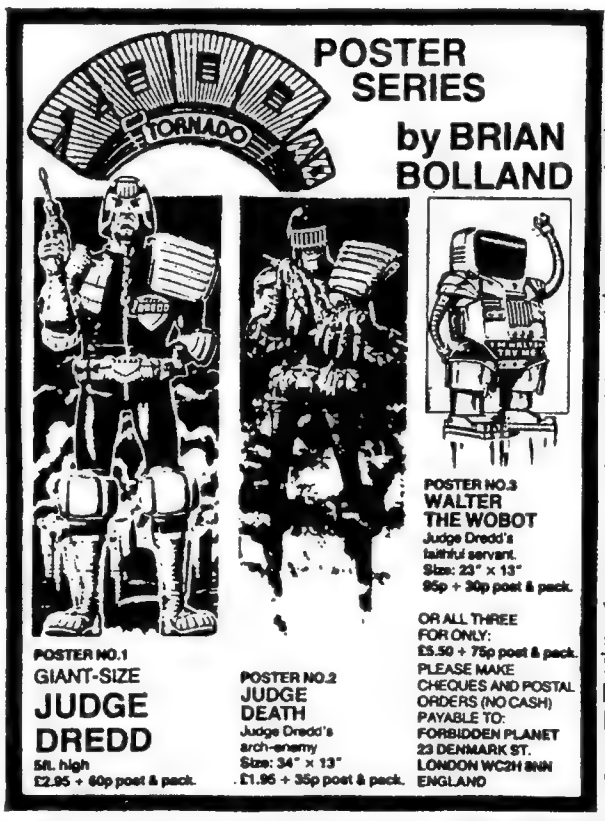
MYSTERIES IN SPACE:THE BEST OF DC SCIENCE FICTION COMICS
250 page softcover of DC science fiction stories in full colour, including art by Frazetta,Infantino,Anderson,Kubert,Finlay-characters include Adam Strange/JLA,Star Hawkins,Atomic Knights,Captain Comet,Space Ranger and J'onn J'onzz. New covers by Murphy Anderson and numerous cover reproductions inside. Quality product, really a pleasure to read. £4.80

The following are three new softcover art books from Paper Tiger publishers. Each is in a large 8 x 11 format of over 90 pages.

AIRFLOW Philip Castle
Stunning full colour volume featuring the individual erotic/machine imagery which has thrust Castle into prominence. The book includes his work for Clockwork Orange and portraits of James Dean,John Lennon,Elvis Presley,Margaret Thatcher,Mr Spock and others. Adults only-please state you are over 18 when ordering. £5.25

RICK GRIFFIN Rick Griffin
Excellent selection of work by one of the most talented artists from the psychedelic period. Included are some of the very hard to find rock posters he did in the 60's,a fine selection of his comic work and some of his recent religious paintings. Colour and black and white volume. £5.25

SOLAR WIND Peter Jones
Peter Jones has illustrated scores of paperback covers in recent years and this album is a comprehensive collection of his work. Full colour reproduction throughout showcases his fantastic visions of traditional sf and fantasy images £5.25



MAGAZINES

CINEFEX 2 This magazine in just the space of two issues is now the equal (in terms of depth of coverage, professional standards and general quality) of Cinefantastique, which is a notable achievement. If you've not yet ordered a copy, we do highly recommend this magazine. This issue has a main feature on The Empire Strikes Back, really superb coverage. £2.10

COMICS JOURNAL 59
Excellent issue with really interesting long interview with Ted White,talking about Heavy Metal and his role as editor. Also this issue apart from the usual good selection of reviews,news and so on there is an interesting look at Jack Kirby with the emphasis on the 4th World books he did at DC. Comics Journal is justifiably considered the leading American fanzine and is well worth reading. £1.20

MEDIASCENE PREVUE
41 Converted to a magazine format,this issue features a wrap-around full colour Empire Strikes Back painting by Jim Steranko, nearly 40 pages of photos,art and interviews about Star Wars,plus coverage of Clash of the Titans,Saturn 3 and the Lord of Light and many other features. Special 100 page issue,only £2.40

*MEDIASCENE PREVUE 42
Superb issue! Just bursting at the seams with everything a fantasy fan could desire - behind the scenes with the Empire Strikes Back, Barry Smith's art for a new movie, Superman - photos from the new film -, Silver Surfer - exclusive coverage of his screen debut, Flash Gordon - the new film, a new Harlan Ellison story featuring A Boy and his Dog, many other features 112 pages. £1.80

OVERGROUND

CEREBUS 21 More Aardvark weirdness featuring Captain Cockroach who bears no likeness to Capt. America. 75p

ELFQUEST 8 Storyline gets more involved, art gets more polished,life goes on. What more could you ask for? 75p

SPIRIT 25. Beautiful colour covers, Spirit index continued, Life On Another Planet,Spirit stories,even a (small)photo of our shop and some of the crew. Superb magazine. £1.05

PORTFOLIOS

BILL WARD PORTFOLIO
Bill Ward of "Torchy" fame has come up with an excellent portfolio of six plates featuring six stockinged ladies in various poses. Black and White in illustrated envelope. £3.90

THE CITY - WILL EISNER
Six plates in Black and White with an extra light brown effect making the overall picture similar to an etching. Each plate has a side map with a poem on it. The theme of the portfolio is the "city" - strongly presented scenes of urban, human desolation. Enclosed in an illustrated three colour folder, this is a signed and limited edition. We will include a special book-plate done by Will Eisner for our recent signing session, with each order. £9.75

ELRIC Frank Brunner.
Six black and white plates of Michael Moorcock's fantasy hero,plus as an extra bonus there is one colour portrait of Elric. Signed and numbered from a limited edition of 1000. £15.00

a pretty good effort. Not everything went according to plan, but that's par for the course with conventions; about 2000 people had a good time, which is the main thing. I was sorry that a lot of the regular Congoers weren't there; it would have added to my pleasure to have been able to renew auld acquaintance with friends from Comicon '79. -ML)/

Ed Hillyer

So, there are some complaints in Bem that Reaction is lacking a direction to argue in, and so little abrasive comment it's beginning to look like a DC letters page. I agree. I feel that most recent writers have been happily conversing and arguing with themselves rather than each other, and it gets boring when you know just what you're going to write about yourself next. Does fandom exist, I ask myself, or has Stan Lee got one hell of a schizophrenia case? One fault is the elusive Mike Cruden, who, apart from busying himself with creating smaller versions of himself, seems to crush most budding arguments by leaping upon the offender with the most adroit reply. I have not forgiven him for answering Ivo Steyn's critique of Neverwhere as a collection of small, brown depositories so bloody well I had nothing left to say. Why are you so damned eloquent, MC? /(.....MC)/ /(Gosh, Ed, you've left him speechless... How do you do it?)/

Travelling back to Bem ≠28, I think Mike Taylor is quite wrong in his attitudes towards what constitutes 'comic art', and indeed the validity of the term of 'art', when applied to comics. Yes, one can be a competent and imaginative designer without being a good artist, but not, I would say, vice versa. One of the fundamental skills of comic art is layout - the flow of panels and panel elements across the page must be understandable to the eye, otherwise the story becomes interrupted. It's all very fine if an artist can draw convincing anatomy, vehicles, scenery etc, but if he is a comic artist he must string them together to make a coherent story. That is why a comic artist is more creative than a single illustration draughtsman, because he has a story to tell as well as a universe to create. /(I find it much more difficult to compose an effective single illustration than to draw a comic strip. The two forms are quite distinct and not directly comparable, especially qualitatively)/ John Buscema emphasized in 'How to Draw Comics' that comic art was a lesson in dynamism and theatrics. John Buscema is the unrivalled master of comic book art. He is not only skilled at pace, drama, and illustration, but also very diverse in his subject matter and, above all, quick. When his place, or that of Gene Colan, among the Eagle awards is disputed (as it was in Bem 30) I see pure crimson. This man should be honoured, for it seems that he is not flash enough for fans to recognise. George Perez, whom I enjoy too, is a favourite fan artist, but while a competent draughtsman cannot draw people very well. Still, he gets more praise than poor old JB. You fans sometimes don't know comic art when you see it. Well, us fans, I mean. /(That's true)/

I don't know if many people have followed me in this diatribe, but if they have I'd like to know if they consider comics as art, and what they term 'comic art'. Are you satisfied with Epic's pretty pictures, or do you want a solid control of pace and emphasis in storytelling? Mike Cruden defends comics as an artform. I say comics is a 'form of art' by virtue of its very existance as something seperate from novels and films, and it is certainly not inferior to written prose in character, even if it often is as it is written for a commercial young market. I have certainly learnt far more from comics about art than sitting in a field of poppies painting uninteresting trees. /(About the only thing you learn from comic art is how to draw comics, and if you ignore nature - the real world - all you end up with is a bunch of codified cliches.)/

Steven Owen

Thanks for MoI ≠5. Not as meaty as usual due to the four page Nostalgia and Comics ad. Mind you, it pays the bills, doesn't it, Mike? /(Nope. The presence of the ad added an extra 4 pages, so no material was lost - it just seemed that way! -MT)/

What articles there were, though, were interesting. I really loved the Howard Chaykin piece. He's one of my favourite illustrators, and the thing that really impresses me about him is his ability to change and experiment. A lot of artists develop a style which remains with them for life. Chaykin, on the other hand, has had so many art styles I've lost count. My first Chaykin comic was the Nick Fury Spotlight. At the time, I wasn't really interested in art styles, but even so something about this comic was different. It was unlike any other comic I'd seen- a completely different style and I really loved it.

No real controversial points raised in the lettercol, except for Dave Harwood's rather surprising comments that he's not really interested in stripzines. I find that hard to believe coming from an artist (and a good one at that). I tend to go for the stripzine myself, mainly because of my strong love for art. (I'd also rather buy a book like "The Studio" than any mainstream comics). Maybe Dave hasn't got a tremendous interest in "art for art's sake" or maybe the novelty wears off after a few years. /(Having been 'in' fandom - on and off - for 13 years or so, there are obviously certain standards of art and writing I can no longer find acceptable. In theory I wholly support the idea of stripzines; in practice I feel most of them really aren't very good. It's as simple as that.)/

Mike Taylor

A few comments which you may find interesting. Firstly, if you're new to MoI, hi, and I hope you stay along for the ride. I think that enough time's passed for me to be able to confidently (?) state what direction MoI is heading, and what can be expected in the future.

It seems to me that the emphasis lies very much on art at the moment, with upcoming interviews with various comic artists, lot's of excellent art from the likes of Mark Farmer, Dave Harwood etc, and art - biased features. There are more illustrations per se than in many other 'zines, though not so that it dominates the written side, which is just as important.

It isn't all art, though. There's a fair diversity of other themes covered...

For instance, next issue (≠7), all being well, will have at least 24 pages of actual fanzine material (ie. not ads), a full colour cover and interview with Mike McMahon, an article by Pete Scott, letters, a 4 page comic strip by Mike Collins and Mark Farmer (see illo on the right), The Wednesday Column by Kev Sutherland, Amateurs Inc by Alan Reeves and, oooh, lot's more.

Also from ≠7, if we can hold onto a rigid schedule, there'll be a Bem News Service, MoI and Bem should be appearing alternately and this will hopefully provide a near-monthly news service...

Due to price increases, postal increases and a need to cut down expenditure within 3 or 4 issues, the cover price will be 40p. (still very cheap when you consider what you're getting). However, the old subscription rate of £2.00 for 6 issues still stands until Jan 30th, 1981. After that, it goes up to £2.00 for 5 issues. So now's the best time to invest your hard-earned cash...

From ≠7 onwards, reviews are invited. However, they won't be 'Bem-sized', but larger, in-depth half-pagers, allowing more scope for investigation into the medium. There's no other restriction, other than the fact that I don't really want synopses of any kind; People should be able to read the reviews without having any surprises given away. Perhaps the Micronauts ≠26 review by Alan Reeves in this issue is a good example of what I mean...

Back issues of MoI are still available. 1-4 for 25p each, or 80p for all 4, along with ≠5 (with its beautiful Dave Harwood full-colour cover) at 35p.

The ad rates for MoI ≠7 are as follows; Full page, £8, ½ page, £5, ¼ page, £3, an eighth page, £2, a special display panel - £1. Bear in mind that MoI now has quite a healthy circulation...

And that's all that over with. Sigh of relief. All that remains is for me to hand a big thanks to Martin Lock, who has supported MoI all through its brief history, and without whose encouragement (along with others) I'd probably have given up long ago. When he suggested this joint issue to me, I was really bowled over, and jumped at the idea. I think it's been a worthwhile experiment, and I leave it to you to let us know how well it's succeeded.

Thank y'all!

Mike Taylor.

The review deadline for MoI 7 is Feb 20th.

COMIC SHOWCASE
BOLLAND
AMAZING FANTASY
SPIDER MAN
SCIENCE
WORLD OF NO RETURN!
THE JOKER IS A TRADEMARK OF DC COMICS INC. ILLUSTRATION COPYRIGHT ©1980 DC COMICS INC. AND USED WITH PERMISSION.

THE OLD COMIC SHOP

15 CATHERINE STREET·LONDON WC2

01-379 3345 Six days a week — 10am - 6pm

COMIC SHOWCASE

COVER GALLERY

We specialize in old American comics from the 40s through to the 70s

THE INCREDIBLE HULK
THE STRANGEST MAN OF ALL TIME!!
FANTASY AS YOU LIKE IT!
SUPERMAN
No. 39
MARCH-APRIL—TEN CENTS
AND NOW THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN
FRONTLINE COMBAT
No. 4
JAN-FEB
I'LL BET THEY NEVER SUSPECTED WE'D GET A CANNON UP HERE!
THEY DIDN'T RECKON ON OUR RECOILLESS CANNON!
MYSTERY IN SPACE
10¢
AUG NO 53
APPROVED BY COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE ROBOTS ARE REVOLTING AGAINST HUMAN CONTROL! GOT TO RAY-BLAST THEM BEFORE THEY RUN RIOT OVER THIS WORLD!
A THRILLING ADAM STRANGE ADVENTURE...
"MENACE OF THE ROBOT RAIDERS"
25¢ 1 DEC
MARVEL FEATURE
THE DEFENDERS
"THIS IS IT! THE AWESOME ORIGIN OF THE DEFENDERS THE MOST FABULOUS FIGHTING TEAM OF ALL!"
MARVEL COMICS GROUP

FANTASY UNLIMITED

BY MIKE TAYLOR

If there's one animal which is extremely rare in Britain, it's the monthly fanzine. 'Zines come and go, often lasting only a few issues, terminating their existence in missed deadlines and unpaid debts. Even the most successful can usually only stretch to a bi-monthly schedule.

However, Fantasy/Comics Unlimited did turn out monthly for an admirable length of time, keeping not only its regularity, but also a higher standard of material than could, at the time, be found in many other fan productions.

F.U. editor, comic dealer Alan Austin commenced his publishing activities back in 1970 with "An Adzine". Given the title, readers may be less than stunned to hear that this initial venture was in fact an adzine, carrying little more than adverts, as opposed to a fanzine, which should also carry features, articles, columns etc. As the editor was in the habit of continuing the numbering of the 'zines from fanzine to fanzine (as one 'zine ended and a new one began, the new one would pick up the numbering where the other left off), An adzine #1 could perhaps be justifiably labelled as Fantasy Unlimited #1.

"An Adzine" lasted all of four issues, after which it metamorphosised into 'Aftermath'. "An Adzine" was originally abandoned due to a shortage of the editor's time, and the reason why Alan A. changed the name on revival is not known.

Basically, "Aftermath" was a continuation of its predecessor's ideal, a stencilled, fairly regular, advertiser. Little more. (Though small quantities of editorial material appeared in #'s 3 & 4) And yet it wasn't long before features began to creep into Aftermath. "The Marvel Superhero Index" surfaced, giving the titles and names of the creative team on all of the issues of certain books, and there was an article by Chris Smith on "The Atlas Westerns". (Many of which, incidentally, might be better known to many reasonably recent arrivals as "Marvel Westerns", including Rawhide Kid et al).

In June 1971, Aftermath breathed its last with #7, and still there was no sign of Fantasy Unlimited. Alan Austin began to collaborate with Nick Landau on 'Comic Catalog', which was produced in the same format (stencils - litho cover) but with a lot of pretty coloured pages...

'Comic Catalog' gave more of an emphasis on the features side than any of Austin's previous efforts had- mainly because of Landau's presence. For instance, the last issue before the two parted, #4, contained fanzine reviews, a convention report, letters, news, and a 3 page comic strip by the talented Alan Hunter, all of which fitted in very neatly with the 28 pages of ads.

It was because Austin preferred less features (adverts obviously having the advantage of paying for themselves) that he left CC and started... yes, you guessed it, Fantasy Unlimited.

FU was described in the editorial of its first issue, #8, as having "more emphasis on ads, but still with enough articles and features to...brighten up each issue". Strangely ironic, that, considering what was to come. Indeed, even in this early incarnation of what was to become one of Britain's longest running fanzines, some of the basic ingredients were already present. There was "Question Time" - the forerunner of "We Want Information", a comic quiz and a 2 page strip by Alan Hunter. Along with this came an article by Lee Hopewell called "The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Experiment" which centred around whether or not the appeal and impact of comics arises from the visual or verbal. Aesthetic or subjective. (Based on the fact that the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. comic had excellent art, but lousy stories, and met oblivion).

Perhaps it would be laborious and unnecessary to give an account of each issue, though the following one, #9, was an important one and should be mentioned. Not only did it sport a beautiful A. Hunter cover, but it was in this issue that Alan Austin announced his intention to publish Fantasy Unlimited monthly. #9 also began to expand the feature side, and can perhaps be seen as the first solid foothold in the long climb upwards. The fact that Austin was forced to decrease it to 6 weekly, and then later to bi-monthly, a couple of issues later should not detract from the achievement, for it was a momentary glimpse of what would later be a good run of monthly issues.

There was somewhat less emphasis on the 'meaty', in-depth article during the early stages, though even so FU managed pieces on Sci-fi on TV, Swift Morgen, All Star, EC Comics and so on. Notice anything? A certain lack of emphasis on DC / Marvel material, perhaps? It seems that right from the start Fantasy Unlimited did its best to educate other fans into realising that there is a greater sphere of comics than mainstream American comics. This is the first reason why this fanzine was, and is, so important.

Perhaps the most interesting and consistently informative article at this time in

FU was the 4 part "Bouncy Bunny in the Friendly Forest" EC article by Doc Garriock. The first part told of how "Educational Comics" developed from producing romance comics like "Modern Love", "I had two husbands", and "A Moon, A Girl - Romance", to books like "Crypt of Terror" and "The Vault of Horror", becoming "Entertaining Comics" (thereby keeping the 'EC' label) in the process; Of how EC began to appeal to teens, becoming a youth-orientated sub-culture; Of how Harvey Kurtzman, Wally Wood, Jack Davis and Will Elder got involved...

And so it went from there, with future instalments discussing such interesting and inter-connected subjects as the art of Johnny Craig and Graham Ingels, the court case that brought the comics industry under close official scrutiny, and the history of Mad magazine. Considering the current fan recognition of the EC line, this was a very useful series, well-researched and written. It ran in FU's 15, 17, 18 and 19. It did have some faults - points made in one part might be repeated later on in the series, thereby becoming overly repetitive if the article is read all in one go. However, on the whole it gave a rational, factually based argument.

Another multi-part article which was valuable for information was Howard Stangroom's 5 part "A Chronicle of the Most Magnificent Failures in Comic History". The 'failure' apect was generally that of a financial nature rather than artistic. The companies covered were Charlton (in FU 15), Archie (in FU 17), Tower (in FU 18), Harvey (in FU 19), and various 'also-rans', (in FU 20). The series was, again, quite well written, and gave a concise description of the various super-beings involved, the number of issues they lasted, and an opinion of the measure of success they achieved aesthetically.

One thing which very few fanzines try is the idea of devoting the majority of an issue to a particular character or artist. FU ran quite a few of these specials, concentrating on subjects such as Batman, Steve Ditko, the original Captain Marvel, and Berni Wrightson. There were others, Doc Savage & The Shadow, for instance, though these appeared after the name changed from Fantasy Unlimited to Comics Unlimited).

The first of the series, presented with a Kevin O'Neill cover, was the Batman special (FU 16), and it contained a 4½ page article by Alan Austin on "The Joker -Master Villain of the Comic Book", a 3 page untitled feature on TV's Batman, a 3½ page Martin Lock piece entitled "The Brave...The Bold...And The Batman...", and, finally, the 3 page "Batman's Finest" by Austin again.

The first of these gave an account of The Joker's career, from its beginning in the premier issue of Batman in 1940 - useful info for non-millionaires under the age of 50!

Martin Lock's feature, whilst suffering a little from being compartmentalised into an expanded checklist, effectively covered a large number of the Batman team ups...

The final piece in the issue gave a look at the best of the Caped Crusader's artists, with such notables as Bob Kane, Jerry Robinson, Mort Meskin, Dick Sprang, Carmine Infantino and, of course, Neal Adams.

All in all the issue was well researched and very informative, and God help you if you didn't like the Batman...

Steve Ditko was next to appear, and showed clearly that the man's work was very much liked by certain persons... A lead 15 page article on his Spiderman stories seems to confirm that - a feature amply illustrated by examples of his work. The piece was written, perhaps not surprisingly, by Alan Austin and gave a valuable lesson in the appreciation of a comics creator, and the expression of enthusiasm by the author.

This flavour was continued in the 4 page feature on Captain Atom (on which Ditko was the regular artist), by Ruan Lanihorne, "Ditko - Magnum Force..." by David McLintock (4 pages) and "The Wondrous Worlds of Doctor Strange" by Martin Lock (4½ pages).

It seems unlikely that the work of one man can so dominate a fanzine and yet still remain interesting throughout. And yet it works - possibly because the writers did not each fill their time with endless descriptions of Ditko's style - which would have been repetitive and boring.

The Captain Marvel issue, #26, very much concerned itself with DC's revival of the character, and C.C.Beck's disputes with the company. There was "Levity, Learning and Lightning Bolts" by John Pierce, "Conversations with C.C.Beck" by Pierce again, "The World's Mightiest Mortal vs The World's Stupidest Publisher" by C.C.Beck himself, Kurt Schaffenberger Interviewed and various other bits and pieces.

The great quantity of material covered in this issue makes it impossible to give an accurate account here - suffice it to say that very rarely have subjects such as this been covered in such depth in a British fanzine.

An excellently off-beat Rafael Gonzalez Negrete cover lead off the Berni Wrightson special - an issue which contained more of what had gone before, though perhaps hampered by the relative youth of Wrightson's comic career (as compared to the others, who have all been around for several decades). What could one write other than accounts of his (fairly modest) comic stories and appreciations of his style?

Therefore, there was "The Dark Genesis of Berni Wrightson" by George Sandow and Ruan Lanihorne, "The Berni Wrightson Index", and "Why One Zubr enjoys Berni" by Andy Tomiak.

All good reading, but less than usual of the solid core of informative writing.

Yet one shouldn't get the impression that the normal issues of Fantasy Unlimited were anything to be sniffed at - they all contained many excellent features.

One of the most popular of these was the "We Want Information" col. This began way back in issue 8 as "Question Time", perhaps, and soon grew in popularity - headed by a most attractive Alan Hunter logo. Fans were invited to write in with their questions, questions about any aspect of comics or their creation, which were then answered by Alan Austin if humanly possible. This resulted in a wide range of questions, and must rank as one of the best ways to learn about comics...

Another regular col was "The Worlds of Emlock". Martin Lock was, for quite a while, FU's assistant editor - and part of his job was this feature - very much in the style that will be familiar to Bem readers - that is to say, short reviews on many of the latest comics, more often than not aided and abetted by Superswipe Illustrations. Martin remained with FU right into the late 40's (issues, not date:), when he left to concentrate more fully on some other little fan publication he had going...

The most interesting thing, art-wise, was the work of the fan artist Rafael Gonzalez Negrete. He was one of two excellent artists to emerge from these pages (the other being John Bolton, who contributed to later issues of Comics Unlimited). His work had a proffesional finish, very well suited to horror style illustrations (which is why his Shadow and Wrightson covers worked so well). He did several pictures for the Wrightson special, and they could well have been taken from a professional book of the same quality as 'Swamp Thing' - they were that good.

There are many other features which one must mention when talking about FU. For instance, the John Pierce "Alter and Captain Ego" prose stories, the unspecial "Fantasy Uninhibited" which confronted the reader if he found himself facing FU #25's back cover (with an interview with Superswipe along with "Who Wants Information?", "Torrents of Tremendously Trite Trivia, Titanically Typed by a Trained Tapir" and more:), and the witty "George, the Toad and the Rock" by Paul Jay.

One area where FU doesn't particularly roar ahead is in the presentation of fan strips. "Thursby and Dowd" by 'The Demon Dentist' ran in a few issues, and was basically basic - to coin a phrase.

It's a pity that Alan never managed to talk Rafael into illustrating a strip or two...

But FU often found itself at a natural disadvantage with the presentation of art since it was frequently produced by stencil, and therefore the reproduction of the art was not all it could have been.

In brief, then, Fantasy Unlimited was, in its prime, a gem of fanzine production - witty, controversial, informative, regular and cheap. One could hardly hope for a better combination. It showed the courage to tackle subjects possibly not particularly of interest to the general structure of comics as we know them today. It was an honest 'zine, with no pretentions to a higher level than a fanzine might climb to, and with nothing driving it other than a love for the medium - and those who work in it.

Or put another way, Fantasy Unlimited was one helluva fanzine!

IN A SECRET WORKSHOP SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND, A TEAM OF EXPERTS WORK FEVERISHLY THROUGH THE NIGHT !!

FRITZ! PASS ME 24 MONKEY WRENCH !!

ZAPZ!

BUZZ

MORNING -- EXHAUSTED, THE TEAM STAND BACK! A SWITCH IS PULLED!

KLIK

SUDDENLY... AN EXPLOSION!!!

MEIN GOTT!

AHHHH!

FWAP!

COUGH!

COUGH!

AS THE SMOKE CLEARS, A FIGURE APPEARS!
A CAPED FIGURE! CAN IT BE? YES - IT'S...

THE RETURN OF KAMIKAZE MAN

BY REX DIXON & ROB DAVIS
© 1980

Wunderbar!

K

CAPED AVENGER in 'KAMIKAZE MAN MEETS CLODZILLA!'

MEANWHILE, UNAWARE OF THE IMPENDING MEETING, CLODZILLA HAS STAGED A DARING ESCAPE FROM A TOP-SECURITY GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHMENT !!

HURR!

LAUNDRY

CUNNINGLY DISGUISED, HE MAKES HIS WAY TO THE NEARBY CITY...

TO THE CITY I'M

ACME LAUNDRO

TRUNDLE

TRUNDLE

WHERE HE SOON BEGINS TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF THE LOCAL POPULACE!!

HURR!

KAMIKAZE MAN HEARS OF THE CATASTROPHE, AND SETS OFF TO ROUGH UP THE MARAUDING MONSTER!!

K

SOME HOURS LATER, THE SHOWDOWN BEGINS!!

O.K. YOU OVERGROWN LIZARD!! THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE!!

FOOD!

K

YIEEE

HAWIIBEE!!!

GOK

YUM! GOOD! HURRR!

MORE!

SHEE-IT! NOT AGAIN!

THE END

KATHOLICITY

Maybe I'm becoming paranoid -- if I am, I will start writing wordy and pretentious comics about displaced waterfowl and bog-beings which will not sell, but will be acclaimed by fandom; if Gerber can do it so can I -- but it seems to me that there is a vast anti-feminist conspiracy going on in the world of comics. DC are not guiltless, but the worst offenders are Marvel. At least DC doesn't have the hypocrisy to claim that they have a "commitment to women".

Over the last few years, they've been steadily bumping off female supporting characters wholesale -- Batwoman, Iris Allen, Sharon Carter -- and now they have begun to kill or neutralize full-scale heroines. Phoenix and Ms Marvel being the prime examples. It might be argued that they are trying to improve the standard of female characterization, by killing off stereotypes and leaving room for more exciting characters. But you only have to look at the replacements to shoot that one down in flames.

Look at the comparatively new heroines. Look at them! Spider-Woman and She-Hulk. Two more derivative and stereotyped heroines would be hard to find -- and, in addition, Spider-Woman has had an unpleasantly sexist slant for much of her career. Look at the replacement supporting characters. Iris Allen was to some extent a stereotype, but she was at least allowed some courage and initiative. Fiona Webb is a cringing, helpless stereotype of a much earlier tradition. Sharon Carter was little more than a blonde Emma Peel with injections of sickly sentiment -- but is Bernie Rosenthal better? It is not really remarkably liberated to be a glass-blower. As an 'artistic' profession, even a male chauvinist would see glass-blowing as suitable for a woman. And her sentimentality is just as saccharine.

I will say nothing about the adequacy of Sprite as a substitute for Phoenix, as I have no wish to give way to obscenity. For the same reasons, I will make no comment on the removal of Ms Marvel from the scene, except to say that in my opinion it lacked verisimilitude to an almost infinite degree, and struck me as a mere excuse to remove a heroine who had the temerity to "haul off and belt people--like a man"--and a flimsy excuse at that.

Let's look at it from another angle--have any of the deaths held any logical place in the storyline, apart from mere cheap sensationalism? Yes, one. The Earth-II Catwoman's demise was there to provide motivation for the existence of the Huntress, and was well in keeping with family tradition. Batman family tradition, that is. She did better than her husband --his death was mere sensationalism, and they didn't even handle his funeral convincingly. (Dr Fate's thoughts, which we were given, paled in dramatic comparison to those of Superman on the loss of his friend and partner of 30 years, which we weren't given.) None of the rest were necessary at all.

Especially Phoenix's. To begin with, we live in a comparatively uninhabited part of the Galaxy. The people of Marvel-Earth live in a somewhat more lively Galaxy--but there are still more uninhabited than inhabited planets. The odds were better on its being a sun with no life-bearing planets that Phoenix picked to destroy--but Claremont decided that for "icing on the cake" (a.k.a. cheap sensationalism) there should be a race destroyed as well as a sun -- opening a way for Jim Shooter to insist on his own corrupt morality being enforced. Yes, corrupt. The sin of murder is the same sin whether it's one death or millions that results. Has anyone heard Shooter demand that the Wolverine be put to death or worse to punish him for his sins? Of course, the Wolverine is a man, sort of. And Galactus is a man-like entity. And for ages untold, Galactus has been going about eating planets, often inhabited by intelligent life. And Lilandra's people are aware of the existence of Galactus, and have been for a considerable time. How come they never tried to stop his depredations, when they acted so promptly to attack Phoenix? Is it only evil to destroy life-bearing planets if you're a female?

Indeed, if Jean Grey hadn't been an immensely powerful woman I should think the initial emergence of Dark Phoenix would never have happened. The number of male entities in comicdom with the capacity to destroy worlds is considerable. And never a one of them gets tempted to misuse his power -- or if he does, he controls the urge with no trouble. Yet we are asked to believe that Jean Grey could easily be corrupted by such a comparatively puny being as Mastermind? Oh yes, but he was a man you see -- he'd have a stronger mind than a woman, wouldn't he? Powerful women are dangerous, because their minds are still weak. With great power comes great responsibility, but only if you're a man.

Such seems to be the new Marvel creed. Maybe I am being paranoid...but...

There is of course one female character who should have been killed--well, there are actually two now. The stereotype of mawkish quasi-motherhood, that 'frail, wonderful' old walking cardiac arrest, and the stereotype of cutsie-pie, Disneyesque, mouthful-of-large-white-Osmondish-teeth, girlhood. But will they murder May Parker? Will they slay Sprite? No, them they let live. I'm not being paranoid, ladies; they are out to get us. -KATHLEEN GLANCY

Bemuscene

DAREDEVIL #168 (January)
"Elektra" by Frank Miller & Klaus Janson

Frank Miller, making his debut as DD's scripter, attempts to retain the brooding "devil" atmosphere of the feature and, to a certain extent, succeeds. However, there are more effective ways of doing it than by the arbitrary use of the word "devil" in criminals' language, and the incongruous use of loose-lipped verbiage. "I'll be right with you as soon as I throw out the garbage". Whoosh, criminals fly through the air.

Other facets of the tale also slightly irritate, such as Murdock's informing Elektra that he has hypersensitive senses within a few days of meeting her. I suppose the poor chap's lovesick, but that doesn't necessarily mean that his brains have to sloosh out his ears.

Minor criticisms aside, this is, without a doubt, one of the better comics on the stands, and one of the few that warrant serious attention. -Stephen McGonagle

Unlike other series at present being published, this emphasizes that the hero and his alter ego are the same person. They think and act as facets of one man, neither complete without the other, and are recognizable as one person.

Yet another excellent tale. Beautiful stylish, moody and suitable art, especially the second half of the tale, set in heavy rain at night. As always this is excellently plotted and paced, although this issue the scripting (by penciller Frank Miller) is too wordy in places, and is altogether not quite up to Roger McKenzie's standard. It's still all wonderful stuff, and much though I dislike "heart-rending blasts from the past", I really enjoyed this issue--and that's why I buy comics. To enjoy them. -M. Moorcroft

Bo-oring! Next please... -K. Williams

DC COMICS PRESENTS #29 (January)
"Where No Superman Has Gone Before" by Len Wein, Jim Starlin & Romeo Tanghal

Hey! I actually found a book I <u>like</u>... The story's a little hokey, and goes just a tinge over the top, admittedly, but it is a worthwhile effort, and provides a use for Spectre that actually <u>fits</u>. It still doesn't explain about that Earth-1 Spec of a while back, but I dare say that will be explained somewhere, sometime.
-K. Williams

VAMPIRELLA #92 (December)
"Bracelets, Demons and Death" by Rich Margopoulos & Rudy Nebres; "That Future Long Ago" by Bruce Jones & Auraleon; and "Second Coming" by Will Richardson & José Ortiz; $1.95

I bought this especially to review here in Bem, but now I've tasted Warren horror stories at their best, I will probably purchase future issues.

"Bracelets, Demons and Death" is a Vampi tale, and concentrates on her room-mate, Cryssie Collins. A metamorphosis transforms her into an evil Demon, and Vampi is virtually helpless. Gripping...

The second story is all about Stephen and Connie Lootz. They are in a car accident, and when Stephen Lootz awakes, he finds himself far into the future--in 1980. The daughter is actually his wife, his son is really a young actor, his wife is another, and his school chum in reality is a government agent. Confused? You won't be, if you read this ish of VAMPIRELLA!

The last story deals with a woman called Amy, and an old buzzard who goes by the name of Joshua. Now Amy is actually pregnant, and the baby is a child possessed. Old buzzard Joshua has an idea...

The art in the first story is the cream of the issue; José Ortiz's and Auraleon's artwork leaves much to be desired as far as I'm concerned, and, though stylish, could do with improvement. I suppose all artists have to be unique.

Recommended. -Simon Bostock

X-MEN #141 (January)
"Days of Future Past" by Chris Claremont, John Byrne & Terry Austin

YAWNNN! This is not even remotely interesting! There's not an original idea in the entire book; the change-the-future bit is not only old-hat, but anti-multiversal (and the Marvel Universe is <u>supposed</u> to be running on 'multiversal' lines these days); the last thing we needed was <u>another</u> bunch of evil mutants ("when in doubt, throw in some more evil mutants"--and where are they all coming from, anyway? There <u>was</u> a time, I thought, when Cerebro, and the Sentinels, had all living mutants registered, no?); and as for the old 'danger room' business, its <u>whiskers</u> have got whiskers... (On the other hand, I must confess a sneaking affection for Kitty, aka Sprite--but I hate to spoil a good savage put-down by saying so.)

Okay, X-Men Fan Club, your heavy mob knows where to find me. -K. Williams

DETECTIVES INC
by Don McGregor & Marshall Rogers

When it comes to criticizing any film, TV or literary project about their own minority interest but intended for a wider audience, serious comics fans and homosexuals have one thing in common--in the excitement and anticipation of 'their' subject being presented to a mass audience they tend to lower their critical standards in the sheer joy of being thrown a bone of recognition from the majority. Witness the good press that trash like the Hulk and Wonder Woman TV shows got.

As a homosexual comics fan then, I was doubly at risk of letting standards slip as I read this--a comic book which <u>has</u> to be judged on the same level as any other literary/artistic endeavour, since it is free of the usual constraints commonly used as excuses for inability by comics professionals (the Comics Code, deadlines etc). The story also happens to revolve around a homosexual relationship.

Ostensibly, 'A Remembrance of Threatening Green' is a Detective Tale. A woman is murdered (in flashback), the two detectives are called in to find the murderer --who turns out to be who you thought he was all along. But the hunt for the murderer is just a frame built around the real subject matter, the ambiguities and uncertainties in the relationships between the various couples: the two detectives, the detectives and their wives/lovers, the murdered woman and her female and male lovers, and so on.

Because the book is dealing with a subject that has NEVER been satisfactorily dealt with in comics, because it is obviously an honest attempt by all concerned to broaden the horizons of comic book subject matter, I am tempted to say that yes, on the whole it is a worthwhile effort. But it's not.

The writing is very bad. Like all Don McGregor's characters, these people talk some strange metaphysical language which, although sometimes quite touching, is, sadly, more often embarrassing and certainly unrealistic. Reading it is like reading printed song lyrics ("we never could see the transitions could we Rita") --it just doesn't look right on the page.

The characters are of course McGregor's perennial Romantic, ever searching, ever talking Lovers; and, equally predictable, the 'buddies'--the perfect Redford/Newman platonic friendship that has no parallel in Real Life.

As a heterosexual (I presume), he handles homosexuality competently. It is obvious he's done his homework. There are some nice exchanges that reveal his insight, eg asked whether she had ever wanted children, the lesbian answers "You ask them all don't you". Some clangers get through, though. Rubbish like "Don't ask me how I became queer", or talk about "turning straight" as if it was any more feasible for a gay to turn straight as it would be for a heterosexual to 'become' homosexual.

It may seem strange that the first serious attempt to depict a Gay character in comics should have a woman as its central character, since women are virtually ignored in Gay literature in comparison with men. It's not so strange though, when you consider that lesbian sex is a masturbation fantasy for a lot of straight males. It gives Marshall a few opportunities to draw some lesbian bed scenes.

Now that we're on to the art at last, I have to say that I found it very unsatisfactory. The pages are cluttered with unnecessary detail. The figures are badly drawn; they all look awkward, as if they were walking on tiptoe or something. The faces are atrocious. This is the sort of book that needs a Colan or Gulacy--someone capable of describing visually the many weird and wonderful emotions McGregor puts his characters through. Rogers was simply the wrong artist for this book.

In spite of all McGregor's faults though I still find a lot of his work oddly enjoyable. Despite being a bad writer, he still manages, albeit crudely, to convey a touching sensitivity and love of words, and a love of beauty in the world.

The very last page of this book, with its snow and Christmas trees, makes me feel nice -- but then I've always had a thing about snow.

To paraphrase Rainier's closing speech: I don't quite believe in Santa Claus, but I'm holding out for McGregor. -Joe Mills

SHE-HULK #11 (December)
"In the Shadow of Death" by David Anthony Kraft, Vosburg & Springer

It's a race against time. Will the She-Hulk be given the antidote before it's too late? Of course she will. Far more interesting is the sub-plot concerning a grieving father's hatred for Michael Morbius.

"It was my daughter Helen. She was returning home from her first date. She was a happy child, so full of life until she met you."

This touch of 'relative' comic book realism may be a bit too real for the kiddies who prefer their carnage wholesale and on a far less personal level. Oh well, Marvel can always resurrect Phoenix to cater for this need; she was always good for a planet or two. -S. McGonagle

ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET THE BRIDE OF HEMBECK -- by Fred Hembeck

The title says it all...anyone put off as I was by the seeming inanity of the Hembeck strip on the Daily Planet page is recommended to try this full-length epic, and laugh themselves silly.

Freed from the constraints of brevity, Hembeck indulges in all the fantasies we superhero junkies can only normally dream of, including such gems as Supergirl and Ms Marvel arguing over the right to Jim Mooney's pencils, and Cyclops exhaustedly trying to keep up with Phoenix's -- ah-- appetites! -Lilian Edwards

DR WHO MONTHLY #46 (November)
30 pence; a Marvel Monthly; 36 pages

So Marvel has finally decided not to merge titles, but just turn them into monthlies. Good idea, although I can't figure out why STAR WARS WEEKLY had to be transformed; the stories were fresh, and even the reprints were interesting the second time around.

The brain-wave of mixing strips and articles has turned out to be a good one. QUESTAR is one such magazine -- and this is another. Unlike QUESTAR, though, this magazine doesn't include good enough art. I just hate the artwork that Dave Gibbons turns out constantly; his drawings of the Doctor look more like caricatures, and the Doctor's assistant in this issue seems to have a fairly big bottom!

The features on the series aren't all that bad -- the only trouble is that the letters page, entitled WHO CARES, seems to print all the kiddie letters and no others. Surely adults write in, or at the very least kids who report on interesting matters. Articles include UNIT HOTLINE (a boring column in which everything is repeated month after month), The Tenth Planet, a competition (a hard one at that --did I ever tell you that I won a prize in a STAR WARS WEEKLY comp?), and GALLIFREY GUARDIAN (yet another boring column).

To end the issue, we have yet another instalment of STAR TIGERS, an interesting strip centering around the adventures of Abslom Daak, a Dalek killer. This is relatively superior to the first strip; "Abslom Daak, Dalek-killer, and Prince Salamander bring the kill-wagon up from the planet Dispater", so we are told. All interesting stuff... -Simon Bostock

SUPER ADVENTURE STORIES #4
50p by post from M.J. Gibas, 87

for 32 A4 pages with a 4-colour cover)

When an underground comic or stripzine reaches its fourth issue, one can safely assume that there is some sort of proven audience for the title. It would certainly seem that this is the case with the above --and, for the most part, deservedly so.

The cover is as good a place as any to start looking at a magazine--especially, as in this case, when it does not imply any non-existent grandeur inside. In fact --quite frankly--it is very weak. Colourful, yes -- even well-drawn -- but weak... nonetheless. Rendered by Gibas himself, the general composition works well, both as a front cover and a wraparound cover concept. His figures are stereotyped, but the characters' faces lead to curiosity. The back cover is less accomplished, but remains unseen on the initial viewing. The largest fault in the cover lies with the hand-separated colour technique, where (apart from a few tonal applications) the blue, magenta and yellow have been plastered down in a blanket fashion, carelessly out of register with the original black and white art. Cheap printing has not helped--the black is actually a dark grey that does not succeed in disguising the colours on top.

Enough! As I said, a cover does not make the magazine, and this one is stark enough to draw the new reader's attention.

The interior, apart from a 6-page item called "Nova Star", is far more impressive than one might have thought.

"Heart of the City" by Gibas & Kurzman looks interesting, but has been printed under a blanket grey tone that all but obscures most of the artwork. "Omicron" by O'Leary and Pearce boasts competent fan art, but doesn't really get moving on a story. The next episode will tell if this is a permanent fault.

The remaining two stories, "Red Dragon" by Kurzman & Gibas, and "Entropy" by Boyd & Gibas are the best -- even outstanding. The latter uses heavy black ink to accomplish an effect without marring its detailed artwork. Each page is packed, with varying panel breakdowns that provide plenty of action and story-telling room at the same time. A strange being called Doctor Teddy interests me too.

For the most part, "Red Dragon" works the same way -- but economizing more on presentation, if not space. Gibas embellishes the piece to curious effect, using various styles to elaborate on the basic cartoon approach.

Fan art it may be--but Gibas, and possibly Kurzman, could have interesting futures. -Mal Burns

ADVENTURES WITH SCALEXTRIC
Speedmaster in "The Race of Death"
by Dez Skinn & Ian Kennedy

You may remember an enigmatic news item in Bem-29, saying that Studio System, Dez Skinn's new company, were involved in producing a 40-page full-colour, 500,000 print-run one-off comic magazine, on glossy paper, with painted colours like the old EAGLE, and including "a superhero & everything". Well -- this is it.

And an excellent job it is too; it's the latest edition of the Scalextric catalogue, and as such will be sold in toy shops, and given away with new model racing sets. There are 18 pages of colour photographs of Scalextric cars, sets and accessories (they've certainly got rather sophisticated since I had a layout), with occasional comments from Speedmaster and his friends--but the main attraction for you and me is the 21-page racing adventure story, featuring Scalextric's new hero, Speedmaster; it's well worth seeking out.

Ian Kennedy's painted art, on the slick paper, certainly makes the "Marvelcolor" super specials look sick. The speed and the drama is communicated beautifully, and the sheer power of these idealized formula one fat-tyred brutes...

Dez Skinn had the more difficult job, however. A number of Scalextric concepts had to be fitted into an exciting story; Speedmaster, his organization, arch-foe and friends had to be introduced; and everything had to move at over a hundred miles per hour, while being accessible to an age group from about 9 up, many of whom would not normally read adventure comics. Still, Dez has consistently been one of the top innovationary forces in UK comics for 5 years or so now; he knows comics, and the comics business, and here he mixes all the necessary ingredients with a sure touch. This is the most exciting addition to a Scalextric collection that a model racing fan could buy; it's certainly worth a comic fan's money, too. -Ruan Lanihorne

CONAN #118 (January)
"Valley of Forever Night" by J. Marc deMatteis, John Buscema & Ernie Chan

Roy Thomas, on this feature, always maintained a readable standard, even if the creeping staleness that repetition brings was apparent long before his departure. Nevertheless, J.M. deMatteis, in the much respected opinion of those in the know (whoever they are), has "a difficult act to follow".

Maybe; but here Marc turns in what is, in my opinion, the best Conan tale to be featured in this format in a few years. All the usual elements are present, but are handled in a way which seems refreshing--however, whether this is due to the talent of the writer or the fact that, finally, Thomas is on his way, remains to be seen.

The plot: Conan catches a horrible disease -- and I'm not surprised.
-Stephen McGonagle

ACTION #515 (January)
"This Is My World, And You're Welcome To It" by Wolfman, Swan & Chiaramonte; plus the Atom in "Sorry--Wrong Powers" by Rozakis, Saviuk & Colletta

A startling similarity in plot between fan favourite title #1's latest tale, by Chris Claremont ("Days of Future Past"), and fan favourite title #42 (approx) here, scripted by Marv Wolfman. Over in X-MEN, a tyrannical future must be changed in the present; here, a tyrannical present, ruled by Vandal Savage and upheld by the Man of Steel himself, will have to be upset in the past. Which will be the most satisfactory conclusion, I wonder?

Marv Wolfman's inventive, relentlessly logical script has inspired Curt Swan to produce some excellent art. Before, I've considered Marv a "one-book" scripter, with only his TOMB OF DRACULA work above mere competence--but his recent run of DC work, both on the Superman titles and of course The New Teen Titans, gives me hope that his best work is to come.

Luthor is Savage's science advisor; the Savage Planet is edited by Perry White; Major Lois Lane is in charge of security in Emperor Savage's palace; Jimmy Olsen leads the resistance; and Superman, raised by the Kents from infancy in the palace, battles rebels the way he usually fights crooks and invading aliens. Until, that is, Savage murders Major Lane!

This alternate Lois Lane is introduced on page 4, and disintegrated on page 16, but Marv proves she's one character he understands, as important a part of the Superman legend as Kal-El himself. This is her story, really; a story of courage and conviction, of tenderness, compassion, and two people who'd be lovers in any reality they shared. If Marv Wolfman was to write it, then Lois could star in her own comic again. I'd buy it. -C.N. Padgett

CONQUISTADOR

F5, 123, DEVONSHIRE ROAD, LONDON SE.23.

All orders must be accompanied by cheque or P.O. made payable to CONQUISTADOR. All orders sent at buyers risk. Credit notes issued on all unfilled orders unless refund requested. All of our packages are securely wrapped, with certificate of postage. Unsatisfactoyry goods returnable within 7 days for full refund. POSTAGE: COMICS, Min.40p 1-5 comics thereafter 5p per comic.
MAGS/BOOKS. Value up to £5. ,80p , £5-£15, £1.25, £15-£25,£1.50, £25 up ,£2.00 max.

ALL COMICS M-NM.

AVENGERS. 200 @ 95p ANN. 7 @£2.50 190-199 @ 20p ea.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA 1350p 2-4 @35p, 5 up 30p. CAPTAIN MARVEL 28-30 @£1.50, 31-33 @£2.75

CONAN 2 @£16, 3 @£20, 4,5,6 @£5.50, 7,8,9, @£9, 10 @£8.50, 32 360p,83-90 @40p ,91-99 @35p,100 @65p 101-14 @30p 115 60p 116 up @30p K/S 1 @£4.50 G/S 1@£2.95, KING CONAN 1@75p 2,3,@60p

DEFENDERS 1 @£12.50, 2@£4.75, 3@£4.55, 55@ 95p, 56-60 @60p, 61-69 @40p. DAREDEVIL 161,162 @60p

DR.STRANGE 1@£2.95, 2,3,@£1.95 , 35@60p, 36 up @30p . FANTASTIC FOUR 201 up @30p. FEAR 11,12@£1.75, 13-18 @£1.25, 19 @£9.50. HOWARD DUCK 1@£2.75, 27-31@60p. KULL 1@£2.95, 2-4@£2.75 ,5,6@£1.50.

MANTHING(OLD) 1@£5.95, 2-7@£1.95, G/S 4@£9, G/S 5@£7. (NEW) 1@50p 2 up 30p. MARVEL FEATURE 2@£4.75 ,3@£3.95

MARVEL PREMIERE 1@£3.95, 3@£4.25 , 4@£2.95, 5-7@£1.50, 8@£1.95, 9-14@£1.50. MOONKNIGHT 1 up @30p

MARVEL 2IN1 Ann 2 @£2.95. MICRONAUTS 1@£1.50, 2-5 @£1.25 , 6-10@£0.85, 11-15@70p, 15-20@45p 21up@30p,Ann 1,2,60p

NICK FURY 8-11,13-18 @85p. RCM SPACEKNIGHT 1@50p 4,5@60p, 6-9@45p , 10 up @30p. SHE HULK 1@60p 2-5@35p 6up@30p

SPIDERMAN 121@£9, 200@50p 201up@30p. STAR TREK 1@35p ,2up @30p. SILVER SURFER 11-18@£1.65. OUR LOVE STORY 5 (RARE STERANKO)@£9. TOMB OF DRACULA 19,20 21,@£1.25, 70@75p. WARLOCK 1@£4.50, 10-15 @50p

X-MEN 56@£4.50 ,59,60,61,62,@£3.95 ,112,114@85p 123-130@60p, 137@£1 ,Ann4 @65p. 138 up @30p.

SWAMP THING 1@£4.50, 2,3,4,@£2.95, 5-10@£1.50. saga 1@£2.25, 2@£1.75, 3,4,@90p

HEAVY METAL 1@£3.95, 2@£3.50, 3@£3.75, 4-14@£2.50, 15@£2.95, 16-20@£1.50, 21 up @£1.30.

SPIRIT 1@£3.50, 2@£2.95, 3-16@£2.50, 17,19-25@£1.15, 18@£1.50. EPIC 1@£1.75, 2,3,@£90p

2SOC 1@£2.25, 5-14@£1, 17-24@75p, 25@£2.50, 26-30@£1, 31up @80p HOWARD DUCK 1@£1.50, 2 up @80p

SAVAGE TALES 2@£8.50, 3@£5. MEDIASCENE PREVUE 41@£2.40, 42@£1.95. SHADOW REALM 1@£2.50 ,2@£1.95,3@£1.65.

STARLOG 1@£4.25, 2@£3.75, 3@£3.50, 7@£2.95, 4-9@£2.50, 10-15@£1.95 , yearbook @£2.95.

FUTURE 1@£2.25, 2@£1.75, 3-5@£1.25, 6 up @95p. FANGORIA 1@£1.75, 2up @95p. CINEMAGIC 1 up @95p

QUESTAR 1@£1.95, 2@£1.50, 3-10 @£1.50. FANTASTIC FILMS 1@£2.45, 2-7 @£1.85, 10 up @85p

CINEFANTASTIQUE STARWARS ish. @£5.25, CE3K ish. @£5.25, ALIEN ish. @£1.95, BLACK HOLE ish. @£4.95, FORBIDDEN PLANET ish. @£4.95. BIRDS ish @£2.25. CLASH OF TITANS ish,@£2.25.

THOUSANDS MORE COMICS & MAGAZINES IN STOCK . S.A.E. WITH ALL WANT LISTS PLEASE.

COMIC BAGS"U.V." TREATED @ £ 1.65p per 100 post paid.
MAGAZINE BAGS @ £ 1.65p per 100 post paid.
2000AD SIZE BAGS @ £0.95p per 50 post paid.

BOOKS *** BOOKS *** BOOKS *** PORTFOLIOS *** PORTFOLIOS *** PORTFOLIOS *** BOOKS *** BOOKS *** BOOKS

BLOODSTAR by CORBEN @£5.75 NEVERWHERE by CORBEN @£3.50 ART OF JOHN BYRNE @ £3.75
FRAZETTA 1,2,3, new 4 @£3.95 WIZARD KING by WOOD(h/c) @£9 (rare) DETECTIVES INC. by ROGERS @£4.25
ART OF STAR WARS @£6.50 HOW TO DRAW COMICS THE MARVEL WAY @£6.50 MANHUNTER SAGA @£4.25
JUDGE DREAD ANNUAL 1981 @£1.80 2000AD ANNUAL 1981 @£1.50. SABRE by GULACY @£3.75.
A CONTRACT WITH GOD by WILL EISNER signed h/c @£5.95 ,s/c @£2.95. SPIRIT DAILIES Vol 1@£2.45, 2,3,4@£3.25
LADY LUCK 1 £3.25 Vols. 1&2. ALIEN MOVIE NOVEL @£3.95 ALIEN ILLUS.STORY @£1.95 EMPIRE by CHAYKIN @£3.75
STARLOG GUIDEBOOKS; ROBOTS,ALIENS, FANTASTIC WORLDS, @£3.95, HEROES, VILLAINS,@£2.50, WEAPONS@£1.95
SPACESHIPS 1 @£2.25, 2@£4.75, SPECIAL EFFECTS VOL1&2 @£4.75.
TWO FICTED TALES "E.C. LIBRARY" 4VOLS @£44.00 inc p&p.
MARVEL 1981 CALENDER @£2.95, EMPIRE STIKES BACK 1981CALENDER @£4.25 STAR TREK 1981 @£3.95

PORTFOLIOS SIGNED LIMITED EDITIONS ELRIC by FRANK BRUNNER @£16.00 inc. p&p.
CITY by WILL EISNER @£ 9.75 inc. p&P
FANTASTIC ISLANDS by BARRY SMITH @£19.00 INC P&P
SYBILLA by BARRY SMITH @£15.00 inc p&p
ALPHA OMEGA by TIM CONRAD @£14.00 inc. p&p
POWER & GLORY by JOHN POUND @£ 22.50 inc p&p
STRANGE by MARSHALL ROGERS @£ 8.50 inc P&P

NOT SIGNED UNLIMITED EDITIONS; METAMORPHOSIS ODYSSEY by STARLIN @£5.50 inc.p&p
APPARITIONS by BRIGHTSON @£5.50 inc.p&p
ADAMS SETS A & B @£ 5.00 ea. or £9 the pair inc. p&P
THE X-MEN PORTFOLIO @£4.25 inc. p&p
NEW BARRY SMITH PRINT JUST IN "PSYCHE" signed ltd. ed. @£7.50 inc p&p

WE HAVE THOUSANDS MORE COMICS, MAGAZINES, BOOKS, PORTFOLIOS IN STOCK .
ALL THE VERY LATEST NON DISTRIBUTED ISSUES AVAILABLE THRU THE MAIL OR AT ALL THE COMIC MARTS
COME AND SEE US

MOON KNIGHT #3 (January)
"Midnight Means Murder" by Doug Moench & Bill Sienkiewicz

Y'know, it's quite clever the way that Sienkiewicz manages to make his signature on the cover look like 'Neal Adams'...he's a very clever imitator all round, that lad...but as a 'storyteller' he still leaves a lot to be desired. Talk about padding! Still, Doug Moench never has any trouble filling up millions of panels with dialogue, no matter how forced or boring it may become. Gawd, this book is feeble. (Anyway, Batman does a far better 'Shadow' than Moonie...) -K. Williams

This title is a pleasure to read, and to review. Every character, even the most minor, is beautifully portrayed both in prose and pictures. The arsonist on page 2, the hit man on page 3, Samuels and Frenchie, all seem so real and vivid.

This series has a distinct moody, down to earth flavour, and contains pieces of grim humour (Moon Knight calls the villain "refreshingly psychotic"). No glitzy costumed villains here, or unbelievable plot devices. The key word is realism... IF you can accept Moon Knight, all else in the book seems natural.

A perfect blend of writer and artist here, and...I hesitate to say it, but I feel this series could be a classic.

-Matthew Moorcroft

MICRONAUTS #26 (February)
"Assault on SHIELD" by Bill Mantlo, Pat Broderick & Armando Gil

Bill Mantlo, writer and creator of this comic, is beginning to be noticed by the use of several elements which emerge time and time again in his scripts; old and tired plots, the return of numerous old heroes and villains, a kind of accidental immortality which forces his characters to perpetually return from the dead, and a style of writing which manages to break through the reader's necessary suspension of credibility into the area of silliness (for example, just about everything that "Odd John" said in Micronauts 19-20).

So with all that in mind, it's rather embarrassing to admit I liked this issue.

Sure, several of the Mantloesque elements which have become painfully prevalent in recent days are present -- we see the return of Baron Karza, and mainstream Marvel characters (Nick Fury et al) worm their way into the thing, and yet it's a good mag. I enjoyed it.

Perhaps the first notable good point would be the art--I've heard severe criticism of Pat Broderick's work, perhaps due to the inconsistency of his faces within any given story. And yet he seems to have settled onto this book, and the work has become more stable and dependable. His art is often very imaginative and detailed, but in a way that rarely confuses the necessary relating of the drama. He has a fine sense of layout and design, and he captures the flowing movement so integral in the making of dynamic, interesting comics. There seems to be plenty of enthusiasm here, and already Chaykin's stint on the book seems little more than a bad dream...

It's interesting to note that the book hasn't lost all the atmosphere lent to it by Michael Golden. Some of the lighting effects on the faces and use of artificial tones bring back happy memories.

And so to the story itself. When reduced to its bare basics, the plot is not stunningly original. All-powerful madmen who seek to conquer the universe (or microverse, even) are quite common, it seems, but the basic formula doesn't become apparent until you look for it. Perhaps the basis of a good comics story is that the characters, and the situations in which they find themselves, engage the reader in such a way that he fails to look at the whole as a plot. Who knows? Certainly, there have been several excellent comics which are based around less than novel concepts. Their more engaging properties hide the flaws.

And, on inspection, it appears that this issue has many flaws. The largest of these is that Baron Karza lives again -- and to justify that remark, we should return to the first Karza story in Micronauts 1-11.

The thing that was most striking about the first few issues was that they were different, and some of this came from the fact that the story was more or less conceived as a whole. Read all in one go, the Baron Karza issues hold together as a complete story, rather than a series. And the most significant part of that story is the ending, the triumph of the spirit of humanity over the dark, profiteering side of human nature. The "death" of Baron Karza. That final panel with Karza's shedded armour, and the words "There will be peace at last".

Naturally, this is a comic book. And a comic book where everything's peaceful is going to get mighty boring pretty quickly. And yet, read in the light of what has transpired in #26, the entire story has been rendered meaningless. This is because it has transmuted into a comic series, rather than a finite tale with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

The Enigma Force has become diminished in meaning. Originally, there were the predictions that the royalty would fall, to rise again. But to fall again? And after that? The prophecy first suggested that the war with Karza would be the culmination of a long chain of events, spanning over a thousand years. Now, it is no more than just another struggle. It really doesn't matter who wins, because there'll be another conflict along before you know it...

The apparent ease with which the Baron arrives and overwhelms the Enigma Force also undermines what has gone before, even if the end result does seem rather impressive, the defeat of the royalists being so complete. In fact, the totality of Karza's victory makes it all the more likely that the manner in which he is eventually defeated will be a cop-out... I hope I'm wrong.

And there's more. The instant recognition of the Micronauts as comrades by the SHIELD characters bothers me. It's almost as though Mantlo had decided to react against the old hero-believes-other-hero-to-be-villain cliché, but went a little overboard, and struck the other extreme.

But for all the faults, this is a good comic, quite a refreshing change after the slump the title went through for about 10 issues when Golden left (which makes me wonder if Golden didn't have a fair bit of say on the book). Almost a sort of compromise between a fan's comic, and an intelligent kid's comic. The cynics will hate it, the others will like it.

Up until now, having read Bill Mantlo's Howard the Duck and other books, I'd grown to dislike his work and its characteristics with quite a passion. Perhaps this issue, however, signals the beginning of an upward swing which will change my mind?

-Alan Reeves

GHOSTS #97 (February)
"A Very Special Spirit" by Mimai Kin & Mike Nasser; "The Incarnate Bridge" by Kin, Dick Ayers & Rodin Rodriguez; "Deep Six Phantom" by George Kashdan, Ric Estrada & Romeo Tanghal, and "Dr 13 and The Spectre" by Paul Kuoperberg, Michael Adams & Tex Blaisdell

Jack C. Harris has certainly improved this book since he took it over from Murray Boltinoff two years ago; it took time to wade through the inventory, but there's a genuine lettercol, appearances by "name" artists, less insistence on the truth of the ghostly doings--and now the appearance of a genuine DC superhero!

Well, it all depends how you define the Spectre, who begins a guest-star stint in the 8-page Dr 13 feature: he's as angry and vengeful as when Mike Fleisher was his scribe, melting a gang of terrorists into puddles of water. Terry Thirteen, a captive of the baddies until Corrigan's cops arrived, seems to think this a little extreme, as rescues go--you know, I think he may have something there... -Jonn Hay

AVENGERS #203 (January)
"Night of the Crawlers" by David Michelinie, Infantino & Dan Green

Pfah! Talk about feeble fill-ins. As if the story wasn't weak enough anyway, we were treated to a "But did it really happen?" cop-out type ending of the sort that went out (thankfully) back in the early sixties. Pathetic story, worse art ...roll on Bill Mantlo, I say... ((you're not in the brightest of moods this month, are you? -ML)) -K. Williams

THE NEW TEEN TITANS #3 (January)
"The Fearsome Five" by Marv Wolfman, George Perez & Frank Chiaramonte

George Perez at DC. I had my reservations; DC don't seem to have the quality inkers. But I needn't have worried. The pencils here are tight and accurate, and his characteristic layouts are as good as ever -- so it all looks good.

But how does it read? No worries here, either. Marv Wolfman is writing some nice stuff, with a couple of nice new characters and nice slants on the old ones.

(Isn't 'nice' a handy word...)

The Fearsome Five, led by Doctor Light, are a new, powerful group -- interesting both visually and in their behaviour--but the main question is, who is Trigon, and what is Raven's purpose for the Titans?

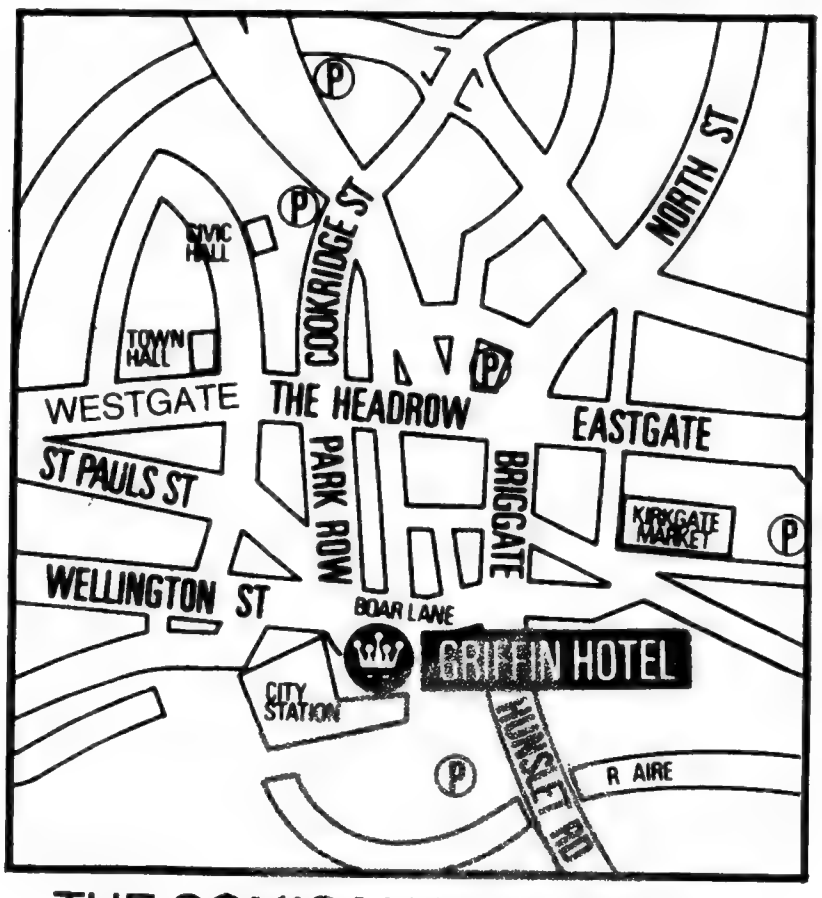
And next, the Justice League!

Looks interesting. -Matthew Moorcroft

LEEDS COMIC MART

AT THE GRIFFIN HOTEL, BOAR LANE, LEEDS ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 24th, 1981

HOW TO GET THERE



THE COMIC MART IS HELD ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE GRIFFIN HOTEL WHICH IS FOUND RIGHT IN THE CENTRE OF LEEDS, NEXT TO THE MAINLINE CITY RAILWAY STATION AND CLOSE TO CAR PARKS AND BUS STATIONS.

YOU'LL FIND BRITAIN'S TOP DEALERS AT THE NEW LEEDS COMIC MART, SELLING THOUSANDS OF COMIC BOOKS — BACK ISSUES, NEW IMPORTS, MARVEL, D.C., ETC. — FILM MAGAZINES, POSTERS, ART PORTFOLIOS, FANZINES AND ALL KINDS OF SCIENCE FICTION/FANTASY MATERIAL!

NEXT MARTS:

MAY 2nd, 1981
JULY 18th, 1981
OCTOBER 24th, 1981

DEALERS:

SEND AN S.A.E. FOR INFORMATION

ADMISSION FREE — OPENS AT NOON

A report by Alan Reeves.

Elves, trolls, gnomes, and fairies are common enough creatures when it comes to fantasy - be it illustrated or otherwise. Their exact origins are probably impossible to even guess at, though their appeal remains the same. It's a sad fact, however, that with so many of the darn things running around, it reaches the point where each new tale is frequently a mere re-presentation of ideas gone by, relying on a safe, dependable formula (now beginning to wear a little thin...)

And perhaps at a casual glance, it would seem that ELFQUEST, the continued saga by Wendy and Richard Pini, fits neatly into this mould. There's the quest, the barbaric warriors brandishing swords, the beautiful ladies... And yet, little further investigation is required before the reader notices another element, one completely new to this theme - and that can perhaps be best described as human warmth, the glow which remains within a well-crafted work which tells of the affection the creators feel for their project.

ELFQUEST is a 40 page alternative comic magazine produced by WaRP Graphics in the U.S.A. It has full-colour covers with b&w interiors, and a 3 times a year frequency, not to mention standards of publication which put the complete mainstream market to shame. And that's only for starters.

WaRP Graphics is a modest outfit - comprising solely of Wendy and Richard Pini, (W.a.R.P, yes?) who more or less put the whole thing together single-handedly.

The original ELFQUEST #1 was published in March, 1978, by an outfit in Michigan that, as things turned out, was neither the most competent nor most honest in the business. Wendy and Richard were promised a magazine size of 8½ x 11 inches, and ended up with the standard comic size, about 7 x 10. The cover was done on cheap paper, and the seperations for colour were "mildly atrocious". The interior was black and white (as are all the ELFQUEST stories), but there was a filler story stuck right in the middle of the tale that totally broke the flow of the book. However, it's true that the book got done, and it was seen by enough people and generated enough interest to warrent Wendy and Richard continuing with the project on their own. That first #1 had less than 5,000 copies printed and distributed. The book has picked up, though, and has gained a loyal readership, so much so that a fan club has been formed to meet the demand (more about that later). Issue #8 (the current issue) had a print run of 32,000. (ELFQUEST #1 has since been re-printed by WaRP, in the larger format)

Elfquest is the story of a group of elves, descendants of the 'high ones' who arrived on Earth long ago, and their struggle to cope with their hostile enviroment, and their natural enemies - humans. And yet the book is hardly a story of violence and death. Rather, it is a saga of love and companionship, the elves being the epitome of all that is admirable in human nature, in physical appearance and in spirit.

Richard Pini was asked about ELFQUEST's beginnings..;

"The series' conception and creation go back a way - the idea behind the whole thing is Wendy's - she's been telling fantasy stories just about all of her life in one way or another, through her art. ELFQUEST is, to a large degree, autobiographical, and reflects incidents in her life and our lives together, as well as different aspects of our personalities and characters. Wendy is at times Cutter, then Leetah - I am Skywise. Not that we role play, but rather that these fictional characters are expressions of us. When, in 1977, the Ralph Bakshi film WIZARDS saw release, we realised that if

one person could make a success of fantasy, perhaps we could too, and tell our story at the same time. Basically, that is how the telling of ELFQUEST came to be."

One of ELFQUEST's most winning features is its great number of characters, all of whom come alive in the stories, and all of whom share the same attractive nature and capacity for emotional warmth. There are, up to now, two different groups of elves - The Wolf-riders, with whom the story commences, and the sun-folk, who accept the wandering Wolf-riders into their village, allowing the two to more or less become as one tribe.

The Wolf-riders, as their name might suggest, share friendship with the wild wolves of the forest. Each elf has a special wolf friend of his/her own, whose back is used for transportation. Yet the wolves are more than mere pets. It was they who taught the elves the wolf-song, and communication between wolf and wolf-rider is achieved by 'sending', a skill not too unlike telepathy, though more refined, unique to the elves. They are a forest-dwelling band, who were forced to leave the woodlands for the arid desert..

The saga of ELFQUEST is seperated into 5 issue-long parts. The actual quest, suggested by the title, did not start until the second part, which began in #6. Some of the issues, though, could also be counted as seperate stories in their own right (for example, issue 7, which centred upon a wine-drinking session in the company of three less-than-charming trolls (Oddbit, Maggoty, and Picknose..)

Much of the appeal of this book stems from Wendy Pini's delightful art style, crisp and clear. She is well at home with this kind of story, and breathes a radiance

into even the shiftiest of the characters. The wide range of expressions and their effectiveness within any given situation, is one of the greatest assets that any comic could hope for, and is one of the reasons why this particular book succeeds in catching one's heart.

The two characters nearest to what you would call 'lead characters' are Cutter and Skywise. Cutter is the chief of the Wolf-riders (and his wolf is/was leader of the pack) and much of the story revolves around his adventures, while Skywise, Cutter's greatest friend, is the first "astronomer elf" (hence the name), and owner of the most winning smile ever assigned to a comics character!

But there are plenty of others, Leetah, Treestump, Strongbow, Redlance... the list is a healthy one, and I can only suggest that you acquaint yourself with all of them by investigating ELFQUEST further.

So in brief, ELFQUEST is one of the most refreshing, amusing, heart-warming, and just darn well done comic books ever produced - anywhere. Let's all hope that it'll be around for a long time to come.

Alan Reeves

Note; Details of the ELFQUEST fan club are available from ELFQUEST Fan Club, PO box 617, Pullman, WA99163, U.S.A. (enclose an international reply coupon). Further info can be found in ELFQUEST 8.

ART ©1980 WARP GRAPHICS

Thanks to Richard and Wendy Pini for additional information.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND HER!
NEITHER DO I!
AFTER ALL... WHAT DOES IT MATTER THAT YOU HAVE A FOUL DISPOSITION--
--AND THE MANNERS OF A TROLL?
SHE'S JUST THE FUSSY TYPE, I SUPPOSE...

The Eagle Awards 1979

542 people voted in the second round of the Eagle Awards this year -- an increase of almost 25% over 1978.

Nine categories have the same winner as last year; six of those were associated with the X-Men, and three with 2000 AD, if you include John Howard's change of name from T.B. Grover. In fact, the X-Men have won "Favourite Comic Book" and also "Favourite Group" categories for all four years for all four years that the Awards have been made--an impressive record.

Making equivalent British awards for every American category has increased the total number of Eagle Awards from 20 to 31 this year... and increased the number of "pass" votes, which actually top 50% in one category, and exceed 40% in four more. In fact, in eight of the fifteen British categories, more people voted "pass" than for the winners...

AMERICAN SECTION

Favourite Artist

JOHN BYRNE	277	51.1%
George Perez	99	18.3%
John Buscema	68	12.5%
Gene Colan	61	11.3%
Pass	37	6.8%

Favourite Writer

CHRIS CLAREMONT	257	47.4%
Doug Moench	128	23.6%
David Michelinie	97	17.9%
Pass	60	11.1%

Favourite Inker

TERRY AUSTIN	221	40.8%
Bob Layton	127	23.4%
Tom Palmer	107	19.7%
Pass	87	16.1%

Favourite Comic Book

X-MEN	297	54.8%
Avengers	110	20.3%
Master of Kung Fu	78	14.4%
Pass	57	10.5%

Favourite Magazine

HOWARD THE DUCK	175	32.3%
Savage Sword of Conan	165	30.4%
Marvel Preview	164	30.3%
Pass	38	7.0%

Favourite Character

WOLVERINE	200	36.9%
Batman	179	33.0%
Spider-Man	98	18.1%
Pass	65	12.0%

Favourite Group or Team

X-MEN	308	56.8%
Avengers	142	26.2%
Fantastic Four	53	9.8%
Pass	39	7.2%

Favourite Villain

MAGNETO	216	39.8%
Joker	163	30.1%
Arcade	138	25.5%
Pass	25	4.6%

Favourite Supporting Character

BEAST	208	38.4%
Wolverine	197	36.3%
Vision	107	19.8%
Pass	30	5.5%

Character Most Worthy of Own Book

WARLOCK	179	33.0%
Silver Surfer	178	32.8%
Killraven	137	25.3%
Pass	48	8.9%

Favourite Single Story

IRON MAN 128 (Demon In A Bottle)	240	44.3%
X-Men Annual 3 (A Fire In The Sky)	178	32.8%
Marvel Two-In-One 51 (Full House, Dragons High)	80	14.8%
Pass	44	8.1%

Favourite Continued Story

X-MEN 125-128 (Mutant X /Proteus)	222	41.0%
Micronauts 1-12 (Microverse)	170	31.4%
Marvel Two-In-One 53-58 (Project Pegasus)	119	21.9%
Pass	31	5.7%

Favourite New Title

HOWARD THE DUCK	202	37.3%
Rom	185	34.1%
Time Warp	67	12.4%
Pass	88	16.2%

Favourite Cover

AVENGERS 185	199	36.7%
Micronauts 7	161	29.7%
Iron Man 128	147	27.1%
Pass	35	6.5%

Favourite Fan Publication

THE COMICS JOURNAL	223	41.1%
The Comic Reader	72	13.3%
Mediascene	54	10.0%
Pass	193	35.6%

BRITISH SECTION

Favourite Artist

BRIAN BOLLAND	221	40.8%
John Bolton	155	28.6%
Ron Smith	81	14.9%
Pass	85	15.7%

Favourite Writer

JOHN HOWARD	140	25.8%
Steve Parkhouse	122	22.5%
T.B. Grover	87	16.1%
Pass	193	35.6%

Favourite Inker

Brian Bolland	227	41.9%
JOHN STOKES	83	15.3%
Gary Leach	73	13.5%
Pass	159	29.3%

(This award went to John Stokes in second place, as Brian Bolland did not feel he was eligible for it for 1979.)

Favourite Comic

2000 A.D.	305	56.3%
Dr Who	97	17.9%
Hulk Weekly	65	12.0%
Pass	75	13.8%

Favourite Magazine

2000AD SUMMER SPECIAL	147	27.1%
Near Myths	139	25.7%
Pass	256	47.2%

Favourite Character

JUDGE DREDD	285	52.6%
Black Knight	81	14.9%
Nightraven	78	14.4%
Pass	98	18.1%

Favourite Group or Team

RO-BUSTERS	141	26.0%
VCs	79	14.6%
ABC Warriors	76	14.0%
Pass	246	45.4%

Favourite Villain

JUDGE CAL	142	26.2%
Mekon	127	23.4%
Modred	90	16.6%
Pass	183	33.8%

Favourite Supporting Character

RO-JAWS	116	21.4%
Walter the Wobot	85	15.7%
Zog	56	10.3%
Commander Kidd	44	8.1%
Pass	241	44.5%

Character Most Worthy of Own Book

JUDGE DREDD	219	40.4%
Captain Britain	163	30.1%
Nightraven	81	14.9%
Pass	79	14.6%

Favourite Single Story

HULK 2 (Nightraven)	115	21.2%
2000AD 137 (Death of a Judge)	99	18.2%
2000AD 145 (Umpty Candy)	73	13.5%
2000AD 127 (Night of the Ripper)	60	11.1%
Pass	195	36.0%

Favourite Continued Story

HULK 1-30, 42, 43 (Black Knight)	138	25.5%
2000AD 140-151 (Stainless Steel Rat)	119	22.0%
2000AD 104-118 (Strontium Dog: Journey Into Hell)	108	19.9%
Pass	177	32.6%

Favourite New Title

DR WHO WEEKLY	273	50.4%
Tornado	35	6.5%
Pass	234	43.1%

Favourite Cover

2000AD 144	119	22.0%
2000AD 113	63	11.6%
2000AD 134	54	10.0%
Pass	306	56.4%

Favourite Fan Publication

BEM	255	47.0%
Cerebro	73	13.5%
Comics Unlimited	52	9.6%
Graphic Sense	29	5.4%
Pass	133	24.5%

ROLL OF HONOUR

ROY THOMAS	176	32.5%
Will Eisner	108	19.9%
Siegel & Shuster	100	18.4%
Steve Gerber	97	17.9%
Pass	61	11.3%

The Eagle Awards, originated by Richard Burton & Mike Conroy, have been sponsored by Richard Burton, Colin Campbell, Mike Conroy, Dark They Were & Golden Eyed, Steve Dillon, Forbidden Planet, Forever People, Nostalgia & Comics, Bob Smart, and Valhalla Books. Use of the "Eagle" insignia is by kind permission of I.P.C. Magazines Ltd. Vote counting & tabulation by Mike Conroy and friends. Watch for the 1980 first-round ballot form very soon.

Marasmus of the Mind

STORY : MIKE TAYLOR ⁜ ART : MIKE COLLINS ⁜ (c)1980 Mast. of Infinity.

IT IS 10.45 am, ON A DAY LIKE ANY OTHER, DURING WHICH THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION OF BIRMINGHAM WORK. THERE ARE THE OLDER MEN IN DEAD-END FACTORY JOBS, THE TRADITIONALLY HARASSED MOTHERS IN THEIR FULL TIME AND DEMANDING ROLE AS HOUSEWIVES, AND THEN THERE ARE THE ART STUDENTS WHO, ON THE WHOLE, ENJOY, AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN, THEIR WORK.

...BUT THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS TO EVERY RULE....

CRAP!

HELL, I JUST CAN'T GET INTO THIS PROJECT!

I SHOULDN'T EVEN BE HERE!

WHAT AM I DOING IN AN ART COLLEGE?

DON'T BE SILLY, ANGUS-

YOU'VE GOT AN INFERIORITY COMPLEX- THAT WORK'S VERY GOOD, THAT IS.

YES - YOU'RE BETTER THAN I AM.!

LESLEY

WELL, WHAT EVER ... IT'S QUARTER TO - TIME FOR BREAK.

ANGUS LEAVES LESLEY AND JOANNE TO TALK -

AH, WELL - NEVER MIND....

I'LL FIND JAYNE -

STUDIO 3

- WHO'S PROBABLY THE MOST PROMISING ELEMENT IN MY LIFE AT THE MOMENT.!

STUDIO 3

Tutor Ms K.J. Shermer

I SHOULD BE DELIRIOUSLY HAPPY! I'VE ESCAPED FROM THE OVERBLOWN MORAL AND MILITARISTIC RESTRICTIONS OF SCHOOL, FOUND MYSELF IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE EVERYTHING IS RELAXED AND INFORMAL -

Fine Art

-AND BECAUSE OF IT I'VE SLACKENED IN MY WORK. I'M BEHIND ON MY ART HISTORY ESSAYS, DOING PRETTY MISERABLY IN MY ART-

...AH, BUT THERE'S JAYNE!

HI! WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

H'LO! THEY HAVEN'T COME YET.

--LET'S GO ON AND GET A CUP OF TEA, THEY'LL FOLLOW.

MAHLER on Jan. 26th

CBS

afeteria

dmin

NAH, I'D RATHER WAIT.

OH.

OH, BY THE WAY, I'M GOING DOWN TO THE *SWAN* TONIGHT - FANCY COMING ALONG?

NO, I DON'T THINK SO -

- AH, HERE THEY ARE! COME ON, THEN, LET'S GO -

NO - YOU LOT GO AHEAD. I'M STAYING HERE. I'VE GOT SOME WORK TO DO.

THERE ARE, HE NOTES BITTERLY, *NO* ARGUMENTS.

LATER, OUTSIDE -

WELL, THAT JUST ABOUT *FINISHES* IT THEN!

NOW THERE CAN'T BE *ANY DOUBT* THAT SHE'S NOT INTERESTED.

DAMN!

-- FIVE YEARS THESE DAMN HORMONES IN MY BODY HAVE BEEN FORCING ME TOWARDS THE OPPOSITE SEX -

--AND ALL I EVER MEET IS FRUSTRATION!

'COURSE, IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE WHY THEY DON'T WANT TO KNOW -

WHO'D WANT TO GET INVOLVED WITH AN UGLY CREEP LIKE *ME*?

EVEN KAY, MY PEN-FRIEND FOR TWO YEARS, WHEN WE FINALLY MET, SHE SEEMED HAPPY ENOUGH, BUT I NEVER HEARD FROM HER AGAIN.

NO NEED TO ASK WHY.

AND THOSE GIRLS WHO JUST PASSED, GIGGLING WHEN THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE OUT OF HEARING...!

WHAT THE BLOODY HELL'S SO *WRONG* WITH ME?

2

FINALLY, FORCED BY THE INTOLERABLE NEBULA OF CONFLICTING PASSIONS INTO A STATE OF **REMOVAL**, ANGUS TANNER TRIES TO FORGET HIS SEEMINGLY COLLASSAL WORRIES AND LET HIS BRAIN FLOAT **UPWARD**....

...INTO DELUSION...

....AND **DREAM**.

I'M **SOMEBODY**!

I'M **WHOLE**!!

I'M REALLY FREE!

NO LONGER HELD DOWN TO EARTH BY PETTY WORRIES AND INSECURITIES!

HERE -- I'M **FREE**!

HIGHER!

I MUST GO **HIGHER**!

..... WHERE I CAN TURN AND LOOK BACK AT THE WORLD AND SEE IT -

IN ITS **ENTIRETY**!

--FROM WHERE I CAN BECOME AWARE OF ALL THOSE WHO ARE **GLUED** TO IT-

-BY THEIR **SELF-CREATED** BURDENS!

HIGHER!!

HIS CLIMB IS TYPICALLY SHORTLIVED, FOR AS THE INITIAL, UNTHINKING IMPRESSION OF LIBERTY WEARS OFF HE IS **STOPPED**-

NO!!

IT'S GOING WRONG!!!

3

M

SOMETHING'S FORCING ME BACK DOWN!!

BUT I WON'T GO!

NO!!

FOR ONCE... IN MY LIFE--

--I'M NOT... GOING...TO--

.....LOSE OUT..!

AS THE TEARS DAMPEN THE IMPARTIAL SOIL, ANGUS TANNER TELLS HIMSELF THAT HE HAS LEARNED THAT THERE IS NO ESCAPE IN DREAMS

HE TELLS HIMSELF THAT HE HAS LEARNT NOT TO BLINDLY HOPE FOR THAT WHICH MAY NOT BE...

BUT THE LESSONS, LIKE THE TEARS,

.....ARE QUICKLY FORGOTTEN.

SIGH.. is on holiday..

But filling in for this ish we have:-

LOOKING BACK (IN BEMUSEMENT..)
(A touch of reminiscing 'n that by KW)

D'you know that I've now been reading and collecting US comics for over 20 years?... Sobering thought. (And I wasn't even drunk to start with..)

"Must've seen a lot of changes in that time, eh, gramps?" Sure have, sonny.. Why don't you sit here a spell and listen to how it was back in the old days...
I mean, for a start, the biggest comics outfit of today, Marvel, weren't even around then.. Oh, their incarnation of the time was in existence, putting out a few mystery and western mags.. but not a force to be reckoned with, or even really noticed.. Not that I'd have cared anyway - I had DC. And DC had Superman.

And Superman had everything. He was super-strong, super-smart, invulnerable to harm, he was super-fast, he could fly, he could travel through space and time... He had everything - everything I wanted anyway.. Now it's been a common complaint/accusation in recent years that Supes is a hopeless case because he's just too powerful - which is as neat a bit of wrong-end - of-stick-taking-hold-of as they come.. Supes being the ultimate-utmost was the whole point, as far as I was concerned - well, heck, if you're gonna dream, dream big, right?...

Not that Supes was my only 'love', mind. Green Lantern provided a very palatable alternative - he might not 'have' everything (in terms of super-powers) but with his power ring he could do everything.. (virtually) And Flash with his super - speed could do quite enough to be going on with.. With characters like those around I was happy - I could dream.. What more could I ask for? Hmm? Marvel heroes? Nah, I didn't ask for 'em.

Still, they turned up nevertheless..! I was underwhelmed, as the saying goes.. I mean, okay, Spiderman was quite fun, in its way - but a hero with even more problems than I had?.. Was that seriously supposed to appeal to me?.. I was looking for escape from problems, f'pete's sake.. And The Fantastic 4 (such modesty..) were not only a daft outfit with unoriginal powers, they were always bloody squabbling.. More inter-family frictions I did not require, thanks all the same..

However.. There was at least one feature of the Marvel books that lured me back time and again - costumed villains.. Now, as some of you will be aware, I've always adored costumed super-crooks - frequently more than the heroes they've fought.. And whereas DC occasionally used them, Marvel always used them.. as near every ish as made no odds..

And eventually the writing and artwork got better - so that against my wishes/better judgement/whatever, I got hooked on Marvel too.. And of course I remain hooked on both Marvel & DC to this very day - but there I digress, and I do wish you'd stop me..

Back to the past again.. I have to say that by and large back then the stories were pretty feeble (with honourable exceptions of course), and I thought so even at the time.. So why did I read 'em all in that case, you enquire? Well, I'm an incurable optimist, and I hoped they'd get better in time.. Y'know what? They did. Optimism is sometimes justified..

The art side of things wasn't too bad; even when I started there were the likes of Swan, Anderson, Heath et al about - on the other hand there were also the likes of Elias, Ely, Baily, et al.. but you can't win 'em all.. Anyway, all that really concerned me about the artwork was that it should be clear and dynamic; so that I could see what was happening, and by exercising my imagination a little feel it.. In recent years I've often been taken to task for not appreciating (to put it mildly) the likes of Craig Russell and such - you know, the fussy, artsy-fartsy stuff? (Whoops, being disrespectful again..) - but as far as I'm concerned, styles like that fail to achieve the basic objective, of drawing me in.. But on the other side of the coin, people point out that I don't like the likes of Sal Buscema, where the style is about as clear and simple as one could get.. isn't that somewhat contradictory, I'm asked.. Well, that's going to a different extreme.. with that sort of style I can't get into it because I can't believe in it.. The range of expressions, poses, &c, is so incredibly limited that I just can't get myself to take it seriously.. No, the early 60s were okay art-wise - they had more than enough to get by on.. Later, when Neal Adams burst upon the scene, I found myself looking at the work of Cardy & Sekowsky &c a little less contentedly.. But that was later. I'll just stick to thoughts of the early days for now.

What other features of the early 60s mags should I mention? I know - how about disposing of a few myths?..

1) Continuity being 'invented' by Marvel: Actually various DC mags were stronger on continuity in the early 60s than in the mid and later 60s.. Continued stories as such were rare, but far from non-existent.. In any case, continuity and continued stories date right back to the birth of Superman and before, way back in 30s - so where this idea that Marvel pioneered such things in the 60s came from I really can't see..

2) Lack of characterisation (at DC): It wasn't the case, for the most part, that characterisation wasn't present back then.. But in stories that seldom ran more than 8 or 9 pages, (often less), it had to be conveyed concisely, in action, brief (somewhat forced) dialogue, and captions. There wasn't the opportunity in that sort of format for detailed expositions of the sort seen in later years.. The details had to be left for the readers to figure out for themselves a lot of the time - but that didn't bother me, at any rate: it was just something else to exercise my imagination on..

Comics are not inherently any more or less enjoyable/entertaining/exciting/&c now than they were in the past - it all depends on the reader..

(20 years on I'm still enjoying US comic-books.. Wonder about 20 yrs from now..)

"written" by Kev Langley.

Yep, it's me. Still here. But my, doesn't the new Mark Farmer 'Oink' logo, introduced last issue, look pretty? I'm still trying to figure out whether or not it's some kind of declaration of opinion about my eating habits... Suffice to say, it's not a portrait - I just wish that I really was that handsome...

Anyway, onto equally boring matters. Two subjects with which to hit you this time; firstly, why do you read comics? (People answering 'what else can you do with them' or 'because I paid for them so I'm damn well gonna read them' can go away and come back when they're sober). The usual comic fan's answer to this is simply "because I want to". And indeed, why not? And yet I wonder if in some people, it isn't a case of arrested tastes.

I mean, surely, the ideal is that you begin reading comix as a nipper, really grooving to the violence and "action", and then as you grow up, you become more interested in the art, the writing, and move onto the finer examples of each, looking for subtlety in the scripts, fine attention to detail in the art (along with the employment of clever comics devices). You move away from the simple-to-understand comix into the more arty stuff. That's logical. That's a sign of a developing attitude to the whole thing. But I wonder about those people who still read the comics because seeing Spidey trounce The Human Eccles Cake turns them on - and those who renounce the finer comic artists such as Adams, Smith + Russell, because they aren't "good comix", preferring instead to stick with the placating don't-have-to-think-about-it artists like Joe Staton and John Buscema. After all, the intelligent mind should easily get bored (Wot, me bored?) with steady helpings of the same thing all the time, and a refusal to accept something different perhaps stands as a refusal to leave childhood behind. I dunno.

And that kinda slides nicely into the 2nd part - (yes folks, every bit as nonsensical as the first) - ie, what about the mentality of the actual comix creators? So what about the mentality of comics creators, you ask.

Um. Good question. Well, despite what I said lo those many lines ago I occasionally get a distinct impression from certain comix of...well, childishness? Spoiled brats? Wet nappies?

Of course, many of the most creative individuals (in art generally - not just comics) do tend to be somewhat eccentric, and yet, well take Jim Starlin. Or don't if you prefer. His "Warlock" series has been highly acclaimed by comix fans - almost to the point of comics godhood (I'm thinking of things like the slightly wet article in Apocalypse 6). And the part in Strange Tales #181 has received particular attention, because the clowns within are intended to represent people at Marvel Comics. Lentean ("head clown around here") is obviously Wein, the editor, and the famous Jan Hatroomi, Romita. The sequence where "Jan" paints Warlock's face is an obvious reference to the ways in which art is often altered. This particular comment seems fair enough ("To hide that which is truly there would be a lie"). On closer examination, though, the fact that Starlin reduces Romita (and companions) to a clown, painting away with a brush and palette, believing that he is creating masterpieces is very unfair, and childish. (If someone does something you don't like (even if it's his job), then you ridicule him, no?)

Obviously the "renegade clown" being pelted with custard pies is intended to represent somebody - dunno who. Any offers? The words "He used to be one of the best, but he tried to buck the system" strike a few chords...

And then we come to the tower of trash - the clowns build it up, and it keeps falling down. An almost embarresingly clear reference to the large amount of Marvel comics. The good issues (presumably meant to be Starlin's, amongst others) are represented as diamonds. Diamonds amongst the trash. "Someone keeps putting it in while we're not looking", says the clown.

So Starlin has a go at the whole company (why do things in halves?) but in a way which can only remind me of the child in Howard The Duck who picks up his pen and begins to write "Marky is a poo poo brain.." Was there good reason for it? Was it justified? Or am I being a humorless little git?

And other little things creep in - The 'Cosmic Code' on ST 179 seems harmless fun, but asserting that Pip the Troll eats nothing but excretement is beyond the pale...

Admittedly, few other pros are as petty as Starlin seems, though constant squeals of protest about certain necessary aspects of the business do cause one to wonder...

Having said all that, Jim Starlin's an ok artist, and that's all you really need to know, but I never did like pettiness, so I'll just stick to appreciating his scribblings, ta all the same.

The whole idea of the preceding is that I like to think that my own interest in comix is a mature one.

How about you?

2¢ = 1p

On all new comics, magazines, books!

HOT OFF THE PRESS!

A new way to avoid missing all the science fiction/fantasy magazines, comics and movie material

— Mail Order Standing Order Form —

Here is a simple way of making sure you receive **every** new issue of your favourite comics and magazines immediately on publication. Send no money, just tick the titles below you want to buy regularly and send the completed form to us.
Every new issue of each title you require will be mailed to you at the beginning of the month. You will be charged the cover price (in the case of American imports at the rate of 2cen = 1p) plus the cost of postage. We can keep postage down by sending you all the titles which appear in one month together in one packet. So long as you pay each bill for the publications you have bought within 30 days you'll continue to receive new issues as they appear.
Specify the issue number for each title you want to start with — we can usually start your standing order with the current issue. Your order will be acknowledged as soon as we receive it, letting you know when you can expect your first copies to arrive!
For further details regarding content, frequency or current cover price of any publication (or if you would like a sample issue), write with a stamped addressed envelope for details.
No minimum order! Order as few or as many titles as you wish.

MAGAZINES/COMICS — U.S.A.
($1 = 50p; $2 = £1; etc.)
—AMAZING WORLD OF DC
—CAPTAIN CANUCK
—CEREBRUS THE AARDVARK
—CINEFANTASTIQUE
—CINEMAGIC
—COLLECTORS DREAM
—COMIC FEATURE
—COMIC READER
—COMIC TIMES
—COMICS JOURNAL
—ELFQUEST
—EMTERPRISE INCIDENTS
—EPIC ILLUSTRATED
—FANGORIA
—FANTARAMA
—FANTASY NEWSLETTER
—FIRST KINGDOM
—FUTURE LIFE
—HEAVY METAL
—HEMBECK
—HEROINE SHOWCASE
—MARVEL COMICS INDEX
—MARVEL SUPERHERO PORTFOLIOS
—MEDIASCENE PREVIEW
—OMNI
—OMNIVERSE
—PANELS
—QUESTAR
—ROCKET'S BLAST
—THE SPIRIT
—STARLOG
—TREK
—MARVEL COMICS*
—DC COMICS*
—MARVEL MAGAZINES*
—WARREN MAGAZINES*
—OTHERS*

MAGAZINES/COMICS — U.K.
—AD ASTRA
—BEM
—DR WHO
—FANTASY MEDIA
—FANTASY TRADER
—FRANTIC
—MAD
—MARVEL SUPERHEROES
—NEAR MYTHS
—RAMPAGE
—SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN
—STARBURST
—MARVEL 15p COLOUR COMICS*
—DC 15p COLOUR COMICS*
—OTHERS

WE SELL BACK ISSUES!
Send large s.a.e. for illustrated catalogue

*Specify the titles required separately (or write for full list)

I should like to receive the above marked publications regularly and agree to pay the invoices Golden Orbit sends for them within 30 days of receipt. I understand I can cancel part or all of my standing order at any time.
Signature (or Parent/Guardian's if under 18) .....
Name (BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE) .....
Address .....
.....
Use a separate sheet of paper if you don't wish to tear out this page.

Golden Orbit

fan-things
BY ED SALLIS

Now that FANTASY TRADER is no longer distributed to Bem subscribers, and also no longer contains Ed Sallis-type fanzine reviews, I can relax a little. FT ≠49 is due out by now at 25p by post for quite a few A5 pages from Gez Kelly,

it will have a Fanhunter column, & also reviews by Les Chester, who has also put together a report on the Marvelcon, which should be lavishly illustrated with the photographs that Les was busily taking that weekend.

And then in January FT joins the select few British comics fanzines to reach their half-century; Gez Kelly of course has special plans for FT ≠50, and I gather that a strip is being prepared telling "The History of Fantasy Trader", scripted by all three editors FT has had in its 8 years of publication--a sort of fanzine equivalent to the Dr Who serial of a few years ago, "The Three Doctors". The script contains much that is true, much that is previously untold--and much that is apocryphal, I hope. But investing £2 in an 8-issue subscription looks like a good idea, both for the features and the ads, with which FT is fuller than ever.

One of the new fanzines out in time for the Marvelcon was SPECTRUM ≠1 18 A4 pages for 20p, plus about 15p postage, from Ken Howes,

visually it may be plain, but the articles are all solidly interesting and well-written. Not surprising, really--Ken was a contributor to Comics Unlimited, and has had reviews in Starburst too, so he's by no means a newcomer to this sort of lark. The checklist of SF adaptations in comics is very useful; the exploration of what makes a comic a classic is well reasoned; and the bits on Sienkiewicz and Moon Knight are well worth your time too. So, why not try a copy?

A change of address is announced: Keith Walker of SF HORIZONS and FANZINE FANATIQUE has forsaken Daisy Bank.

Fanzine publishers are well-advised to send him copies of their brain-children--you get his zines in return, and he reviews just about everything in the aptly-named Fanzine Fanatique. Useful, eh?

Laurence Piper, after too long an absence from these pages, has given notice that he is striking back--we are to expect the first issue of THE ESCAPIST in January 1981. So, Laurence is in need of contributors; get in touch with him.

It was 4 years ago that Laurence was co-editor of a promising fanzine called COMIC SHOWCASE, which was laid low, if I remember aright, by distribution problems--it's good to see him back.

FEATURE ZINE ≠6 30p for 19 A4 pages from Steve Jones,

is the latest issue of a very useful fanzine -- ≠7 will be out next month at the same price. It's an ideal zine for newer fans to contribute to, because it has the excellent policy of printing every submission, be it art, article, letter, or review. The readability of FZ is still high, and you'll find quite a few well-known names involved; but, if you get the urge to join in and contribute to fandom, FZ provides an ideal starting place...so send off for a copy, and see what you think.

By the way, when you send off for a fanzine, the choice is yours whether you ask for the current issue, or the next one -- or you can specify a number, if you've seen a review that mentions a particular article you want. If you ask for the <u>next</u> issue, be prepared to wait until the poor chap can get the zine finished and printed; if you ask for the <u>current</u> one, remember it may be a couple of months old, and if the editor's sold out you may still have to wait for the next issue, unless you tell him you'd settle for a back issue. And when you've got the fanzine in question, find you like it, and decide to subscribe, be careful to specify which issue you want the subscription to start with--next, current, or number -- otherwise, you could end up with two copies of one issue!

DAILY STRIPS ≠6 is out now (with 18 A4 pages -- it comes from the Newspaper Strip Society, ably run by John Dakin,

membership of which costs £3.75); it's excellently printed on slick paper, and contains the 77 daily strips that make up "Where There's A Will", a 1961 Romeo Brown adventure scripted by Peter O'Donnell and drawn by the late Jim Holdaway. It's a jolly romp, and it's very good to see Romeo reprinted like this; the sexist implications of the strip (Romeo has a jinx; any girl who comes near him has an alarming tendency to lose most of her clothes) seem fairly mild by today's Sun standards... that apart, it's all good fun, and a worthy addition to a panelologist's bookshelf. And if you're a member of the Society you get a newsletter too...

FANDOM ≠13 28 A5 pages for an s.a.e. from Fandom Publications,

has come through; less cover reproductions than usual, but lots of comics for sale, and plenty of comics news, and other interesting reading. The next issue should have a directory of UK comics shops; if you order from this issue, you get the next one free--otherwise, a 3-issue subscription is £1, editor Eddie Walsh says.

The Christmas issue (≠8) of THE OWL'S EFFORT 24 A6 pages for 30p from Dick Domar,

is just out, with 13 pages of always-interesting letters and a good comprehensive comics sales list. Dick mentions that TOE ≠9 will cost 35p, and a 4-issue subscription is £1.35; TOE ≠9's sales list will include 3000 odd DC comics, with a lot of early sixties material, so it sounds like a good time to invest in a subscription.

ARGENT VOID PRESS ≠5 has also just arrived in time for review here with 36 A5 pages for 45p by post from John Foster.

There's a 10-page interview with Hunt Emerson by David Noon that's well worth reading (if wasteful of space--it would fit in 2 Bem pages!), strips drawn by Mark Casto and Martin Longley, art by John Stainton (including the excellent wraparound cover), Ronald Bookless, Alan Hunter, Phil Elliott, and Bile, 9 pages of letters, a report on Albacon -- and even a play! AVP is not the fanzine for everyone, I must admit, but if you read Near Myths and know what an Ar:Zak is, it could well be just what you're looking for.

On the 21st of November, we received at the Bem address the following note from Sean Egan, organizer of the 2000AD Society: "Dear Martin, Just a quick note to tell you I am dropping out & going underground."

A kind thought to let us know -- it would have been even kinder if he had put a stamp on the envelope. We wrote back at once (by recorded delivery) to try and clarify where this leaves the Society, and whether refunds are to be made to members, but, as of Saturday 29th, have received no reply. More news as and when we get it--but I'd advise against sending money to the Society at the moment.

RABBITS TEND TO EXPLODE ≠4 22 A4 pages for about three 10p stamps from Dave Haden,

is now out; a pleasant mix of sf, letters, poems, a new (and perhaps sacrilegious) version of the parrot sketch, a radio column, ley lines, and art. More you should want?

To the left you'll find details of the Comics Heroines Fan Club prices; THE HEROINES SHOWCASE ≠18 is the latest publication, with art by Will Meugniot, Brent Anderson, Lela Dowling, Mercy Van Vlack, and others, and articles on the women of the Killraven series, Steve Gerber's Red Guardian, Batwoman (RIP--by Howard Stangroom), Mary Marvel and Bulletgirl, Supergirl in ADVENTURE, and a comparison of Gardner Fox's and Stan Lee's heroine creations. This is not "cheesecake" material like "Star Fems"--it's a fanzine, and a good one.

COMICS HEROINES FAN CLUB
British Pricing List, November 11, 1980
£1.00 = $2.30

BACK ISSUES:
Single issues, 44p each
The Heroines Showcase #5,6,12,16
The Adventuress #1,5,7,8
The United Kingdom Heroine Addict #1

Single issues, 65p each
The Heroines Showcase #18
The Adventuress #9
The United Kingdom Heroines Showcase #2

Single issues, 87p each
The Heroines Showcase #14,15,17
The Heroines Showcase Art Portfolio #2

Single issues, £2.17 each
The Adventuress #6

Single issues, £4.35 each
The Heroines Showcase #13

Please include 11p postage on orders under £1.30. All orders mailed postpaid via surface mail (6-8 week delivery). For airmail (2-3 week delivery), please include an extra 27p for the first book and 7p for each additional book.

ALL MATERIALS & MONIES should be addressed to our British Agent: *Martin Lock*.

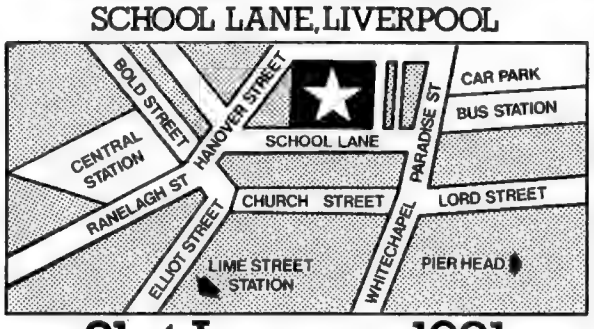
★ ★ ★ ★ BOB SMART PRESENTS THE ★ ★ ★ ★

NORTHWEST COMIC MARTS

Britain's top comic dealers will be selling 1000's of comic books, including the latest Marvel and D.C. imports, E.C., and Golden Age, magazines, portfolios, fanzines, and other related material

LIVERPOOL

BLUECOAT CONCERT HALL
SCHOOL LANE, LIVERPOOL

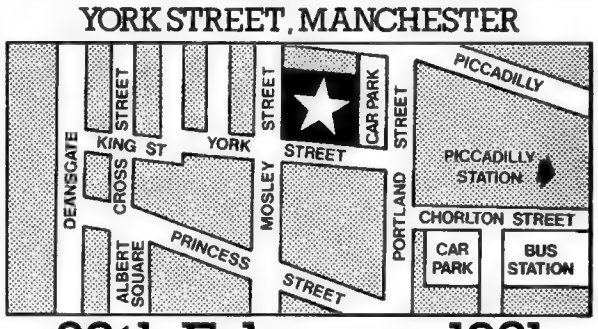


31st January 1981

1981 DATES
14th March ★ 30th May
25th July ★ 19th September ★ 5th December

MANCHESTER

PICCADILLY PLAZA EXHIBITION HALL
YORK STREET, MANCHESTER



28th February 1981

1981 DATES
★ ★ 18th April, ★ ★
Future dates to be announced.

Doors open at 12 noon and admission to each venue is only 20p which includes a FREE raffle ticket.

★ ★ ★ (Prize to the value of £5) ★ ★ ★

★ Refreshments available. ★

★ Buses, Trains and Car parks just minutes away. ★

Dealers information available from:

Bob Smart, 8 Sefton Ave., Congleton, Cheshire CW12 3DB
Telephone 026-02 3417

Collectors send a large S.A.E. for this months FREE mailing package including; Supplement, Advance import list, Related items sheet, etc.

To start off this second page, a few dates for your diary; after December 13th, the next three comic marts to be held at the Central Hall, Westminster are on February 7th, April 4th, and June 6th. These are always excellent opportunities to pick up new fanzines--and try talking to people, it can work wonders!

STARLIGHT ≠1 35p + 15p p&p for 24 A4 pages from Max O'Connor,

issue 2 will be 5p more for 4 extra pages) was delayed over a month by printer problems, but it's a very impressive debut. For your money you get articles on Master of Kung Fu, Howard the Duck, and the black & white Tomb of Dracula, plus some good long reviews, some no-holds-barred reports on postal comics dealers --and even text fiction and a strip. If you are in the Bristol area, contact Max, join the local Bristol Comix Club, and help build Starlight; if not, invest 50 pence!

There are a few rough edges--inevitable with a first issue. The production is let down a little by the art, except for Dave Hornsby's fine front cover; the strip in particular is poorly drawn. So many white spaces, so little detail. The actual format and design of the zine overcomes any problems though, to make this the most accomplished first issue that I can remember for quite a while.

THE ABSOLUTE ≠1 20p + 20p p & p for 10 A4 duplicated pages from Douglas Angel,

is a one-man show, a little messy in places due to the printing method, but engagingly written --again, anyone within easy travelling distance is urged to get in touch with Douglas. For what it is, this fanzine is expensive, I admit; but it's the sort of zine that should be encouraged.

What's so special about this time of year? Another first issue to deal with, FANTASM ≠1, comes next; it's mainly a sales list, so you get 16 A5 pages for only a stamped, addressed envelope sent to Neil Ogilvie.

There are 8 pages of comics for sale, at pretty good prices; also on hand are fanzine reviews, a statement about smoking, and a 3-page report on the Marvelcon, which makes excellent reading, by Heather Ogilvie, who probably isn't related to Neil--except by marriage, of course. At the price, you can't lose!

Mention of the Marvelcon reminds me that I saw a new issue of CEREBRO there; Geoff mentioned that he will sell single copies by post for the cover price, so feel free to send 40p to G.F. Willmetts,

he'll send you the latest issue, which may well tempt you to join the X-Men Fan Club.

As previewed in Bem ≠30, THE ALTERNATIVE HEADMASTER'S BULLETIN ≠3 is now available for 75p by post for 44 A4 pages from Gerald Midgley--I can spell his name even if Mike Taylor can't --

--the 38 pages of strips have such worthies as Mike Gibas, Meirion Jones, Dave Hornsby, Nick Neocleous, Mark Casto, Martin Forrest, Pete Scott, and Howard Priestley doing some excellent work. I hope that TAHB continues, it's one of the best strip fanzines to appear for years. Your 80p would help ensure that the next issue appears soon.

THE EGG CHAMBER ≠2 (19 A4 pages for 27p (rolled) or 34p (flat) from Sean Masterson, 20 Whalley Drive, Lowercroft, Bury BL8 2JZ) has its emphasis firmly on horror and sf, in books and on film. The cover illo of Luke Skywalker is a striking one -- and if you go for STARBURST, there's no reason why you shouldn't like what is in some ways a fanzine equivalent.

Simon Bostock has been busy lately; SF & FANTASY NEWS ≠1 4 A5 pages for a 12p stamp from him.

appeared in October, full of SF, fantasy & comics pro & fan news; it carried a mention of a new apa (amateur press association) that he was forming, so get in touch if you're interested in such endeavours (you send 27 copies of your A4 xeroxed zine, and get back a parcel of copies of other members' zines). And in November SUPERNOVA ≠1 (44 A5 pages for 35p by post, or 6 issues, first class & with occasional extras, for £2.50) came along. It's stencilled, so the text is unreduced, and very much SF-orientated; no bad thing, of course. Luke Rainford did a striking cover for it; Alan Dorey, chairman of The British Science Fiction Association Ltd, contributes an article in the writing of "The War of the Worlds" by H.G. Wells; all in all, it's a good solid read, and also a useful news source for SF and fantasy books and films.

-Ed Sallis

Mal Burns' UNAMERICAN ACTIVITIES AND SUBTERRANEAN HAPPENINGS

I must apologize for being unable to supply a column for the last issue. This was due to hectic circumstances, and there is a lot to catch up on. Before doing so, I would like to make some retrospective comments, however.

Firstly, my comments about 2000AD and the "Dan Dare" television series were a little confusing two issues back. I should make the following points clear, also including some updated information.

The "Dan Dare" television series will not be on your screens until October 1981. Next spring is the date when live action filming is set to begin, and full production to commence. The advance work has already been done, most of the cast contracted, and the visual production is well under way. The merchandising & publishing offshoots have also been finalized to a great extent. I refuse to list the ungodly amounts of novelty items that are scheduled to boast Dan Dare imagery, but the publishing arrangements appear to be this. IPC are holding back all publishing rights to the character, I understand, and are negotiating publishing rights to the actual television series. There will be a "Dan Dare" comic title launched in the Autumn of 1981, it seems; whether this will be published by IPC Juvenile Magazines or Independent Television Publications remains unclear. Also unclear is whether the artwork will be produced through the visuals studio at ATV, with the creators having a shareholding, or whether it will be rendered by freelance IPC hacks. Whatever, the idea is that the comic will be supported by the show--which means a return to the old style Dan Dare we know and love. Whether it really stands the test of time remains to be seen.

The old Dan Dare properties by Frank Hampson, Frank Bellamy and Keith Watson will also be revived for the expected explosion of DD interest. Hamlyn Books will be releasing a series of novel-length reprint titles, probably selling fairly cheaply in album/annual format like last year's "Trigan Empire" release. Whether the series will be presented as a nostalgia line or as a contemporary line remains to be seen.

Also noting IPC properties and the Trigan Empire, I should mention that Bem received a letter from Don Lawrence's publishers, Oberon, in Holland recently. The letter was a response to one of those confusing remarks that I make from time to time, and concerning Don's work being reprinted throughout Europe. Don has been rendering a new strip called "Storm" for Oberon for some years now. It is modelled on "The Trigan Empire" in the loosest of fashions, and excells its predecessor by miles. Oberon run it in their EPPO title, and later arrange for it to be fed out in syndication. It ends up in CIRCUS in France about two years later -- which is where I get it. I did not mean to imply that it was old IPC material, since it is new to most of us in Britain. Nonetheless, Don's old "Trigan Empire" work is also seen around Europe, and remains a property controlled by Syndication International--the IPC subsidiary. Oberon have naturally exploited both items, but, to their credit, approached Don directly to work for them under the European system, whereby he gains most of the benefit that would otherwise go into the coffers of IPC.

Whilst on the subject and also in the act of making personal comment, I would like to remark on Nazer Alikhan's letter in the last Bem. My review of his CHEESECAKE item was a personal interpretation only. If he wishes to define categories --so be it. Either way, I wrote what came to mind, in what I thought was a fairly favourable light. Just because Nazer interpreted this as a bad review, it does not give him any excuse to hurl abuse more reminiscent of early 'underground' journalism than his supposedly dignified 'fan' mentality. Nor, most certainly, does it entitle him to write "Mal Burns is a cretin" in the editorial of his latest issue. Under normal circumstances, such a remark is libellous--even when cheaply obliterated with a pen that does not succeed in masking the different texture of the printer's ink underneath. My lawyers have advised me that he could still be taken to court, although I would never really consider wasting such energies in such a pitiful direction. I prefer only to make these comments, and to advise Nazer that his third issue has been omitted from this column on the basis that, to my mind, it does not yet exist! Of course, if I find an uncensored copy anywhere, I will probably buy it, for the sake of the collector in me.

Although this is not meant to be a mini-Reaction, I would also like to answer Chuck Connor. I cannot compete with your obviously indulgent association with science fiction fandom--together with the ins and outs of its phraseology. As always, I write only as instinct dictates. When I refer to 'Sci-Fi', it is for one of two reasons. The first is that the use of capitals alone might conflict with my methods of citing titles. The second is that 'SF' to me could refer at any time to either 'science fiction' or 'speculative fiction'--two categories between which I make distinctions. Also, as many a comic fan will tell you, when I want to make a derogatory remark about something, I would call it 'hack' or 'sub-standard', rather than just imply it. The term 'pulp' is just as confusing -- to my mind, a presentation method rather than a quality measure.

This is the time of year when I normally like to go overboard with a bit of news about books available for Xmas. Trying to keep it as short as possible--I'll now continue to do the honours.

Big O Publishing have now gone into liquidation, with all their books scheduled for stock clearance. You may well find some bargains about shortly--items by Abdul Mati Klarwein, Bob Venosa and others amongst them. Check out my earlier reviews of this company's titles for more information. From the ashes of Big O, a new company has appeared, now known as Open House Press. Open House will principally be involved with production and packaging only. New titles in the works include more books featuring work by Rodney Matthews, Bob Venosa, and others. I have no details concerning their actual publication, or by whom, at this time.

The companies with whom Roger Dean has been connected have also gone through a good deal of reshuffling of late, but production and publication schedules steam ahead. In the first instance, Roger is no longer involved with the Dragon's World publishing house, though his new packaging company, Magnetic Storm, may well be producing some titles for DW in the future. For now, however, Dragon's World have a fairly heavy publishing schedule of their own, under the usual "Paper Tiger" imprint.

Of these, currently on sale are RICK GRIFFIN and SOLAR WIND. The first is a collection of work by the renowned West Coast illustrator, and a good deal of classic strips from his underground comic days are included. The second title collects together the work of Peter Jones. Peter's work will be familiar to those who follow science fiction book cover art -- many of those pieces are represented here. However, there are also many unpublished pieces and curiosities from other media. Both books are very fine packages and deserve your passing attention at least.

The following titles are scheduled from the same company, for publication next year. They are:

MOSCOSO - a volume collecting together the work of Victor Moscoso, making a good companion to the Rick Griffin book and again featuring many classic comic strips from the American undergrounds.

SILVER ARM - A conceptual book with mostly new work by Irish artist Jim Fitzpatrick, and in full colour. Like the above, it is scheduled for October 1981 release.

LIVING DOLL - A book collecting together work by Bob Carlos Clarke. It has a good deal of striking photo-montage work, and most of it has only been seen in greetings cards and odd magazines. It should be on sale in July 1981.

WE WILL ARISE - An anthology of work by Bruce Pennington, this is mostly previously published science fiction book cover work. There are a goodly number of new pieces however, and unlike the last book, ESCHASUS, should not have been rendered in a hurry. The book should be on sale by October 1981.

AMARANT - This is also scheduled for October next year, and will feature the work of Una Woodruff.

FABLES - Scheduled for release in May next year, this is a conceptual book featuring work by illustrator Jason Carter. It looks very nice.

WATER BABIES - A similar book with art by Susan Rowe. Susan is the wife of David Rowe, another fantasy illustrator. Her work is rather offbeat, but pleasant.

The other company with which Roger Dean is associated is Dragon's Dream. Roger remains as artistic director of this company, but has little to do with the non-creative side, which is now run solely from Holland. All books are published in English however, and this is a guide to what they have in store for the near future.

SUZY
STARDUST
NICK 79.
by Nick Neocleous

ENORMO
Hüter
WOT?
WHERE?
WHO?
He's so Nosey!
FOOD PRICES.. PETS.. HUSBANDS.. CLOTHES.. MEN.. NEIGHBOURS.. THE COST OF LIVING.. BABIES.. WOMAN'S REALM.. OLIVER REED.. BLAH.. BLAH..
HM...
2779
FT INDEX.. CARS.. PETROL PRICES.. YOUNG HOOLIGANS.. MISTRESSES.. GOLF.. GOVERNMENT.. TITS.. ANARCHY.. STATE OF THE NATION.. BLAH.. BLAH..
AH..
EDDIE.. GENE.. ELVIS.. HUBCAPS.. BOBBY.. BOBBY.. BOBBY.. CRICKETS.. BOBBY.. GARY U.S. BONDS.. 5 SATINS.. CRESTS.. CRUISIN'.. DION.. PALISADES PARK.. BLAH..
UH?
ECOLOGY.. SOCIOLOGY.. CRIMINOLOGY.. CRAPOLOGY.. CONSERVATIVISM.. FASCISM.. SOCIALISM.. COMMUNISM.. BOLLOCKISM.. ECOLOGY.. SOCIOLOGY.. BLAH.. BLAH.. BLAH..
UM..
LATER..
HI THERE, ENORMO, WHAT'YA KNOW?
DUH..
!

The most appropriate item to start with is ROGUE PLANET--the second of Frank Hampson's "Dan Dare" reprint trilogy. The above book should be on sale very soon, with the final volume, REIGN OF THE ROBOTS, in production for the Spring of 1981. Because of the forthcoming television series featuring this classic character, it is possible that Dragon's Dream will have to relinquish their currently assigned rights to continue this reprint series; however, as mentioned earlier, Hamlyn Books are scheduling an entire reprint line. Dragon's Dream have some compensation for this, with publication set on three other EAGLE reprint volumes. HIGH COMMAND features the illustrated biographies of both Sir Winston Churchill and General Montgomery, as rendered by Frank Bellamy. THE ROAD TO COURAGE reprints the complete illustrated story of Jesus of Nazareth as rendered by Frank Hampson. FRAZER OF AFRICA reprints the story of a game warden's struggle against wild animals, harsh elements, and murderous villains encountered on a forbidding lost continent, as rendered by Frank Bellamy.

Following the huge success of 21ST CENTURY FOSS, the company are now releasing a collection of science fiction works by Peter Elsdon and Chris Moore entitles PARALLEL LINES. Another title, SKIN SHOW, will showcase the art of tattooing, with photographs taken in both America and Europe. Two illustrated fantasy stories are due, too -- both conceptual, and completely new. One is REVENGE OF THE TIN SOLDIER by Ian Miller, and the other is THIRSPORE by John Blanche. Ian Millar's delayed volume, THE SECRET ART, is also due shortly.

Following the response to THE STUDIO and Jeff Jones' IDYL, a new showcase title for Jeff is being released. It is called YESTERDAY'S LILY and contains a selection of both full colour and black and white work.

During the next year, Dragon's Dream will also be publishing a series of 14 all-new novels, to be illustrated specially by top artists. The first four of these I have information about as follows. THE MABINOGION is translated by Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, with full colour illustrations by Alan Lee. THE DROWNED WORLD is by J.G. Ballard, and illustrated in full colour by Dick French. SHE is by H. Rider Haggard, and illustrated in full colour by Mike Emden. ABSOLUTE ELSEWHERE is by D.J. Lehmkuhl, and illustrated in full colour by the amazing Peter Goodfellow. These novels will be in the same format as the general art book line.

Other books reported previously, and delayed for one reason or another, are also due shortly. I know of no actual cancellations other than those in production at Big O before they folded.

A wide selection of comicbook & fantasy illustrators will be seen in VISIONS OF ROCK -- due from Proteus Publishing next March. All the visual material will be new and unseen. Artists include Robert Hoare, Alan Craddock, Garry Leach, Brett Ewins, Tim Boxell, Neal Adams, Guy Lawley, Kevin Williams, and Kevin O'Neill.

English editions of books featuring comic stories by the following artists are now scheduled for Spring 1981. More information will follow later, but for now, they include Philippe Caza, Howard Chaykin, Angus McKie, Craig Russell, and Richard Corben. Some of the material has never been seen before in the English language, or, in some cases, in colour.

You'll find my review of SUPER ADVENTURE STORIES #4 in "Bemuscene" this time; and now the fifth issue has arrived for review in the same Bem!

I'll keep it brief. The price is still 35p (plus p&p) from the same address; we are back to a black & white cover, but very nicely (and effectively) designed, containing a complete 32-page story by Kurzman & Gibas. Well, this isn't quite the blockbuster I had in mind--looking a bit rushed in too many places -- but it's an interesting read anyway. Certainly worth your continued support.

Next comes CRISIS COMIX, a real bargain at 15p (plus p&p) for 16 A4 pages from Kevin Hopgood.

This issue contains an exciting complete story by Kevin -- introducing a kind of punk character, and packed with references to rock 'n' roll and your average street life. Lots of fun and an impressive start --this column's winner, to my mind.

The first edition/issue of PULP COMIX contains some well-rendered humour material in the style of Edward Barker and other classic creators from Britain's underground comic days. Most of the artwork seems to be credited to Michael Downes. Something uncredited is the publisher address; however, they do invite enquiries to Tim Maurice-Jones.

This may be your only option, since the magazine does not seem to have been distributed very widely, and I forget where I found my copy.

Similar distribution problems must effect the first issue of BIFF QUARTERLY -- a sixteen page, full-colour mini-comic, selling at only 15p and published by Biff Productions, c/o BCM IT.

The content seems to be mostly collages taken from other mainstream strips, but with the text changed and colour separations added. If you like experimental stuff, this one will intrigue you. If not, you may think it a waste of time. I would beg to differ with the latter. The odd thing about this one is that I've seen it nowhere in this country. Fellow researcher David Noon picked one up -- but forgets where. My copy showed up at the Comics Convention in Paris, of all places, last month. How it got there I'll never know, but it ended up costing me 6f -- around 60p. Damn!

50p for 28 comicbook size pages is not always very good value. On the other hand, when that deal comes in the form of ELECTRON PULSE issue one, an exception can be made. The book is published by Rob Davis, who has recently moved from Worcester.

Rob used to send me his drawings back in the old days for Graphixus and Brainstorm Comix--most of which were never to be used. His work has certainly improved a lot since, although the influence of Bryan Talbot is obvious in a lot of his art. Rob has also showcased work by three new artists -- all of whom would stand out in the average strip-zine. This one's a goodie -- go get it.

Many zines brought out special issues for this year's Marvel-sponsored crummiecon; the above-mentioned ELECTRON PULSE was one of them. This time it's 12 side-stapled pages for 15p (plus p&p) --the package is less impressive than the first issue, but Rob's strip and another by P.K. Windett provide four pages of comparable standard. They may still have copies left at the same address.

Alternative graphics and strips are the order of the day in a very inspiring publication called SOUR CREAM. Published by a new co-operative of women cartoonists, two issues have appeared so far, retailing at 30p and published by Sisterwrite,

20p should cover mailing costs of both issues together. I have mixed feelings about the individual content, but Susanna Shannon-Smith is very promising, while in #2 Ann Marie Blatchford & Catriona Sinclair come out on top.

-MAL BURNS

no sales spiel.....no hyperbole

JUST SIMPLY: THANK YOU, AND GREETINGS, FROM EVERYBODY AT

BIYTOO BOOKS: DANGEROUS VISIONS
and DARK THEY WERE & GOLDEN EYED

For without you, we wouldn't be here.